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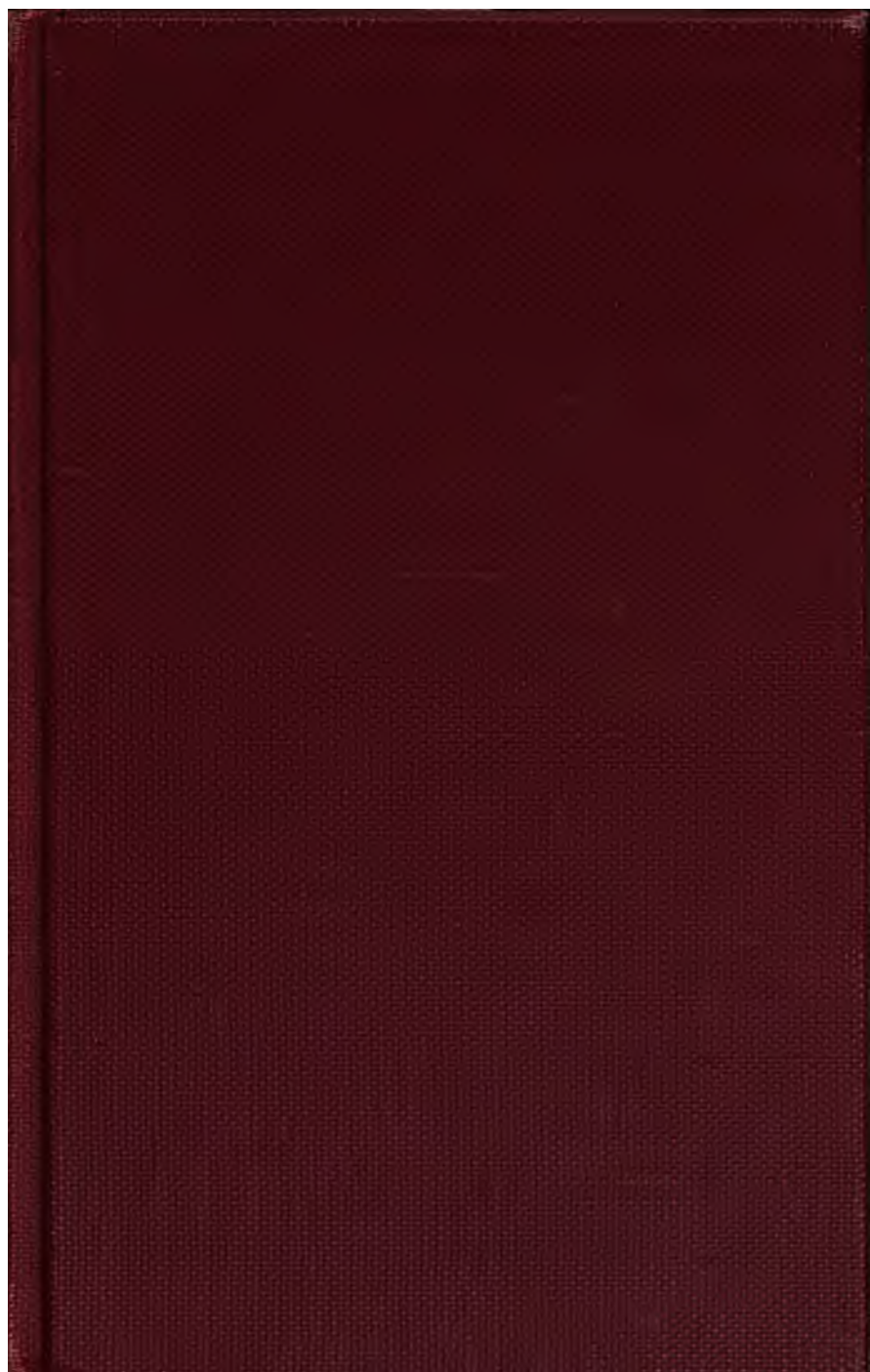
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THE QUADROONE;

OR,

647
76

ST. MICHAEL'S DAY.

Mary A. Howe

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"LAFITTE," "CAPTAIN KYD," "BURTON," &c.

"For me to love is infamy.
Heaven-born love—that links the virgin heart
To its own noble mate—is not for me,
Maiden of a race accursed and outcast.
Alas! *true love* to me is but *dishonour*;
And, ere it bud, must be outrooted,
E'en if the heart come with it."

WILLIAM CUTTER.

Joseph Holt Ingraham

IN TWO VOLUMES.

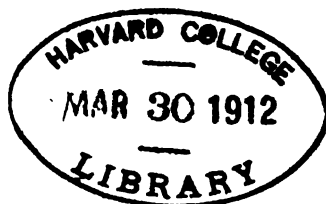
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DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO

M. M. NOAH, ESQ.

MY DEAR MAJOR,

WITH your characteristic good-nature, you were so indulgent as to copy into your paper, and speak favourably of, certain fugitive anonymous letters on Louisiana, of which I was the author, and which originally appeared in the Natchez Courier in 1836; suggesting, at the same time, that the writer of them should embody his information in a book. The paper containing this critique was sent to me by a friend; and I need not inform you, "who have written," with what self-gratulation I laid the unction of your words to my soul, and with what avidity I committed every good thing you had said of them to memory. But I was then a fledgling in type, and had never before trusted my wing to fly above the gins and snares that editors spread out to catch young birds withal! To find that I had alighted in safety made me fancy myself in full feather, and henceforth I boldly resolved to take my flight with eagles; in plain words—to write a

book ; a thing which, in my innocency, I had never dreamed of doing. The result of this valorous determination was shortly afterward made manifest by the appearance, in 1836, of two volumes under the title of "The Southwest."

The first book, like the first sin, is the mother to a numerous progeny. While collecting materials for "The Southwest," I chanced to light upon a brief account of Lafitte's romantic abode on the Isle of Barritaria, in the Bay of Caminada. It struck me that it would afford a fine subject for a story of Romance. I went to work ; and a novel, which I first denominated the "Buccaneer of Barritaria," but afterward called "Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf," was the fruit of my labours.

I had now gone too deep in literary transgressions to turn back, and, the *CACOETHES SCRIBENDI* being strong upon me, I forthwith wrote a third book, on the early career of Colonel Burr, under the title of "Burton, or the Sieges." "Captain Kyd," who did so many wicked deeds "as he sailed," soon after made its appearance. And now the "Quadroone" finishes the list of my offences.

Looking upon you, in some degree, in the light of my "Pater in Literis," as having, in a few kindly-penned lines, which, when I afterward spoke of them to you, had quite escaped your memory, imboldened me to aspire to authorship, I now take pleasure in employing the instrument you have contributed to furnish for yourself in acknowledging

DEDICATORY EPISTLE.

v

my indebtedness, and, with your permission, do hereby cheerfully inscribe your name on the Dedicatory page thereof.

With the highest consideration,

Your obedient servant,

J. H. INGRAHAM.

PREFACE AND NOTES.

THE scenes of the following story being laid in the city of New-Orleans, in 1769, a brief account of the place at that time will facilitate the apprehension of the reader. Seventy years ago, the ancient town, which was composed mostly of Moorish-looking edifices, faced with white stucco, lay compactly, in the form of a parallelogram, on the river Mississippi, with a spacious square in its front. This space was lined with shade-trees; and an *alaméda*, with seats for the convenience of the citizens, who thronged hither to enjoy the evening breeze, bordered that portion of it next to the water. It was sometimes called the *Place d'Armes* by the Creoles, and by the Spaniards the *Plaza* and "Governor's Square."

On one side of it, facing the river, from which it was distant about a furlong, stood the Cathedral, a large, gloomy Spanish edifice, looking like some old Castilian convent, with an imposing *façade*, supported by ten massive pillars, and crowned by towers.

On each side of this structure, alike in appearance, like a pair of stately wings, but separated from it by narrow streets, stood a noble building; one was occupied as the town-house and hall of justice; the other, which was on the east, was the palace of the governor. Both were grand and massive like the Cathedral, and of the same dingy white with which age had stained it; for fifty years in that moist climate gives to edifices the hoary and venerable aspect that in Europe is the work of centuries.

The east and west sides of the square were bordered with houses built after the prevailing French and Spanish styles, stuccoed with white plaster, with bal-

conies, verandahs, and lofty, narrow casements, protected by iron *jalousies*, and ornamented with far-projecting shades, painted with brilliant dyes, various as the number of lattices they shielded from the noontide sun. From this square, which was in the centre of the town, and the scene of every stirring event, and where dwelt not only the governor, but the chief men of the province, diverged narrow, closely-built streets; those on the north and east terminating in dark and almost impenetrable cypress forests. These forests were interlaced with an inextricable network of *lagoons* and *bayous*, which communicated both with the river and Lake Pontchartrain, and even, after leagues of devious windings, with the Gulf of Mexico—labyrinths known only to the *chasseur*, the *courreur du bois*, and the lawless *ladrones* of the lagoons, who in formidable numbers infested them.

A venerable convent of the Ursulines in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral; a gloomy prison, called the Dungeons of the Calaboose; situated in the rear of the hall of justice; an old government-house, once occupied as barracks for the governor's guards, but now deserted and falling into ruins; and a low-roofed market-house near the *Place d'Armes*, supported by a heavy colonnade of brick pillars, completed the sum of its public edifices. Many of its private dwellings were imposing, with their roofs crowned with battlements and ornamented with urns; with their balconies, green lattices, and graceful verandahs; with their wide portals and lofty apartments; and being usually built around a court paved with marble, in the centre of which played a fountain, and about which were cloisters, shaded with Venetian blinds, and adorned with the choicest evergreens and plants, they had an air of Eastern luxury that produced an agreeable effect both upon the eye and senses.

The inhabitants were mostly of French descent, and, like their Gallic sires, were urbane, spectacle-loving, excitable, and patriotic; they were, besides, very de-

vout Roman Catholics. Simplicity of manners, united to great luxury in their houses, remarkably characterized them; while enthusiastic attachment to "*la belle France*" was interwoven with their very religion. Domestic slavery obtained among them to an extensive degree; and, while their laws were singularly severe against legal amalgamation, they openly practised a system of concubinage that has been without a parallel even in Oriental countries.

NOTES.—1. The term CREOLE will be used throughout this work in its simple Louisianian acceptation, viz., as the synonyme for NATIVE. It has no reference whatsoever to African descent, and means nothing more nor less than *native*, one or two of the English dictionaries to the contrary notwithstanding. The children of northern parents, if born in Louisiana, are "Creoles." The term, however, is more peculiarly appropriated by those who are of French descent to themselves, and with this meaning and bearing it is used throughout the present work.

2. A Quadroon, strictly, is one whose blood is four parts European and one part African. This amalgamation is expressed in the French words *Quatre et une*, or *Quatr'une*, from which comes the Anglo corruption of QUADROON. Those, however, who retain even a tenth part of the African blood, and, to all appearance, are as fair as Europeans, and undistinguished from them save by the remarkable and undefinable expression of the eyes, which always betrays their remote Ethiopian descent, come also under the general designation of "Quadroon."

3. As Quadroons are of both sexes, and the English word is not distinctive, the author, in order to avoid confusion, has restored the feminine termination, *e*, of the French phrase, which is *quatr'une* feminine, but *quatr'un* masculine, distinguishing them throughout the volumes as Quadroon and Quadroone, according to the sex.

4. The practical critic will discover that one or two historical fictions are interwoven with the thread of the romance, and that history itself has been followed only when the story chanced to flow with its current.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

Chap.	Page
I. The Spanish Embassy	13
II. The Demand of Submission	33
III. Scene in the Council Chamber	39
IV. Scene in the Place d'Armes	55
V. The Night Landing	66
VI. The Wounded Cavalier	77
VII. The Castilian and Young Courreur Chief	90
VIII. Scene in a Pavilion	104
IX. Estelle and the Condé	116
X. Osma and the Sorceress	125
XI. Scene in a Quadroone's Boudoir	141
XII. The Sorceress	151
XIII. Scene between the Quadroone-mother and her Son	159
XIV. Scene between Gobin and the Trumpeter	169
XV. Scene within the Barriers	190
XVI. The Passage of the Barriers	202
XVII. Scene at Mass	209
XVIII. Scene at the Levée	219
XIX. Scene in Masquerade	226

THE QUADROONE;

OR,

ST. MICHAEL'S DAY.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPANISH EMBASSY.

READER! If thou art one of those rigidists who look for a moral in a story, and seek after instruction in a legend; who expect a homily in a nursery-tale, and demand a moral treatise in a fiction; who deem it sinful to entertain the imagination without improving the heart, and regard as vanity whatever administers to the taste and captivates the fancy, then close these volumes with the reading of this paragraph; for they will neither humour thee in thy prejudices, nor strengthen thee in thy philosophy. Yet, if thou canst be content to admire the lily upon its stalk, and the rose on its stem, and will cease to search longer for fruits amid flowers, thou mayst then turn in a right spirit to these pages; and, should they fail to improve thy morals, to add either grace to thy mind or dignity to thy intellect, they may, perchance, have the no less pleasing power of imparting cheerfulness to thy brow, of communicating warmth to thy bosom, and of infusing new sensibilities into thy soul; and while they spiritualize thy imagination, they may not leave altogether untouched thy heart.

The "Peace of Paris," concluded in 1763 between
VOL. I.—B

Great Britain and Portugal, France and Spain, followed a few days afterward by that of Hubertsberg, at length put a period to the "Seven Years' War," which had converted the whole of Europe into one gladiatorial arena, where king contended with king for crown and sceptre, and emperors wrestled together for imperial diadems. By this important treaty, the government of France reluctantly surrendered to the British Lion her Canadian possessions, which he long had surveyed with a wistful eye from his island-lair, and coveted to embrace to his own royal range. The surrender of Canada compelled France to relinquish with it a favourite and stupendous design she had cherished for half a century, of drawing a cordon round the English colonies by means of a chain of military posts, extending from the castle of Quebec to the fortress of St. John in Louisiana, in order to secure her influence over the tribes of Indians that roamed the vast wilderness between, and the more firmly to unite her remote possessions along the Gulf of Mexico with those in the north. The necessity of relinquishing Canada, therefore, put an end to this vast project on the part of France, for uniting the detached wings of her American empire; and as the territory of Louisiana was of importance to her only as one of the pillars from which to suspend this chain, she had come to a determination to part with that also, if compelled to resign the former. That this would be demanded of her by England, she learned several weeks prior to the "Peace of Paris," and forthwith, by a secret compact, transferred it to Spain, with which power she was then in alliance. By this instrument, the island of Orleans, and all the possessions of France west of the Mississippi, were ceded to Spain, and the French dominions in North America extinguished. The promulgation of this secret compact did not take place, however, until two years afterward, when Spain began to look towards her new acquisitions.

Early one brilliant June morning in the year 1766, the long repose of the peaceful citizens of New-Orleans

was unwontedly disturbed with a rumour, spread abroad by certain fishermen in the market-place, that a small Spanish vessel of war had been seen by them at sunset the previous evening close in with the Rijolets, and apparently standing towards the head of Lake Borgne, which penetrates within two leagues of the rear of the town. Scarcely had the alarmed burghers that chanced to be abroad in the market-place at that hour of the morning exchanged their opinions upon the probable object that could bring the hostile stranger to their remote province, when the sharp sound of galloping hoofs was borne noisily through the half-awakened streets. A moment afterward, a "*petit paysan*," mounted upon one of the wild colts that roam over the prairies of Louisiana, his leathern shirt and long black hair streaming behind him in the wind, rode furiously into the public *Plaza*.

His story, as he drew up suddenly amid a crowd of anxious listeners, ran thus: that a war-lugger, bearing the flag of Spain, had dropped anchor just at dawn at the end of the lake nearest to the city; and that a boat, bearing two horsemen, with their horses saddled and richly-caparisoned, immediately put off from her and approached the land. Whereupon, mounting his nag, he had ridden at speed to convey the news to the governor.

This startling intelligence spread like wildfire throughout the town, and "The Spaniard! the Spaniard!" was on every lip. The whole population was soon astir, thronging not only the market-place, but the *Plaza* in front of the governor's palace; and while they listened in the direction of the road leading through Faubourg Declouif to the lake, as if momentarily expecting to hear the approach of the strangers, their eyes were turned frequently towards the balcony of the governor's window, in anxious waiting for his appearance. The stirring news that had disturbed the repose of the city had already been communicated to him by an officer of his household.

In the mean time, many and various, as the fears and

hopes of those from whom they proceeded, were the conjectures, buzzed about from one citizen to another, as to the nature of this mysterious visit on the part of the Spaniard. That it was of a hostile character, the attitude in which France and Spain had for some time stood to each other left little room for doubt. Yet the small size of the vessel, and, consequently, the inadequate force she must bring, combined with the disadvantageous position for active hostilities which she had taken up, seemed to promise intentions of a more pacific character than the prudent and timid dared to believe.

The situation of the French province of Louisiana at this period, whether viewed in its civil, political, or social relations, was peculiarly interesting. For many years it had reposed under a benign and almost patriarchal government; and from its remote situation, and the simple and pastoral habits of the people, it enjoyed peace and healthy prosperity, while the green bosom of maternal France was torn with feuds, and red with the blood of conflicting warriors. At long intervals of time, as chance directed some solitary vessel to its distant port, rumours reached them of wars declared, of sanguinary battles fought, and of kingdoms that had changed masters; but, ere yet the far-travelled news came to their ears, the wars had long ceased, the grass had grown over the graves of the slain, and the revolutions of empires had become matter of history. Thus it happened that the long-existing hostilities between France and Spain had been amicably ended some months, and, as one of the conditions of the treaty of peace, Louisiana was ceded to Spain by the former power, without the knowledge of the native inhabitants of that lovely province; but they were not, however, to be suffered much longer to remain in ignorance of this transfer of their allegiance.

The inhabitants of the city of New-Orleans, although sharing the characteristics of burghers, and exhibiting, in a greater or less degree, the peculiar features that men, herded together in a community, ever

present, possessed, nevertheless, in some measure, the traits of the simple and quiet character of the *paysans* of the province, who were far removed from the influence of towns, and whose life was altogether pastoral. The Marquis de la Caronde, a gray-headed warrior, had long governed them, with a mildness of sway and judicious exercise of power that, while it bound them together as one family, won for himself the reverential love of all hearts.

Besides the officers of his household, who were few in number, advanced in years, and, like their master, well worn in war, and a few substantial citizens, there lived in the town several noble French families, whom reverse fortunes and other causes had driven into exile. Easily falling into the simple habits, and readily adopting the customs of their unostentatious fellow-citizens, they soon became as plain and unassuming in their manners and mode of life as their good neighbours, while their days glided on with a calm, quiet tenour, in which they derived more real peace and contentment than they could have found amid the splendour and luxuries they had left behind them. In nearly every instance, the heads of these families had died on the scaffold for political offences, or fallen on the field of battle—two of them alone surviving.

These two old nobles, being as far advanced in life as the venerable marquis, and of a rank nearly equal to his own, regularly took an evening pipe with him in the court of his *cabildo*, and, in times of intestine trouble, volunteered to assist in his councils; when, the weighty affairs discussed, the gray-headed trio would sit over their glasses of ruby wine, and talk lovingly and long of *la belle France*, discoursing, with sparkling eyes and a tear on the cheek, of the glorious by-gone days of *Louis le Grand*.

These ancient families were seven in number. In each was a noble youth, born to titles, honours, and domains which he was never destined to share—their names and those of their fathers having been struck out ignominiously from the roll of France. Besides

a fair boy to each, and a small income saved from the wreck of their confiscated estates, nothing remained to the widowed mothers and the two old nobles. These youths were nearly of the same age, of equal rank, and were bound together by ties of friendship so close, that the spirits of Damon and Pythias seemed to have animated their bosoms. They were known everywhere as "*Les Sept Frères*," or the Seven Brothers. The eldest, Alfrède Charleval, had not reached his twenty-second year, and Eugene de Thoyras, the youngest, had scarcely passed his nineteenth summer. Noble by birth, well-formed and handsome in their persons, modest in speech and carriage, and possessing bold and determined spirits, they constituted a gallant band, who might be relied on whenever duty or chivalry should call upon them to act. They were the pride of the town and boast of the whole province, maintaining an extraordinary influence over the minds of the provincial youth by their courage and gentle courtesy, and over the hearts of the maidens by their comely persons and chivalrous daring.

The governor had not yet made his appearance on the balcony, from which he was wont to show himself to the townspeople, and to address them on occasions of a public nature. The anxiety of the multitude was momentarily threatening to overstep the bounds of civic decorum, when the governor's guard, which formed the whole regular force of the province, consisting of some threescore grayheaded soldiers, issued at a quick step from beneath the arched gateway that led to the inner court of his palace. At this sight the confidence of the doubtful among the crowd was restored, and all were assured that proper steps would be taken, either to receive the expected strangers with suitable honours, or meet them at the pike's point, as their present coming should prove of a friendly or hostile character.

Presently there was a cry from some one, who had stationed himself far down the road that led towards the lake, in order to give the signal of their approach;

and "They come! They come!" ran from lip to lip; and the multitude was moved like the deep sea. The governor at the same instant stepped forth upon the balcony, clad in his long-disused military costume; his snowy head covered with a well-worn gold-laced chapeau, and his good sword girded to his side. He was a fine specimen of the cavalier of the old school of Louis Quinze. He was tall, dignified, and numbering threescore years, which, from the fire in his eye and the firmness of his carriage, sat upon him with the lightness of youth. His face expressed remarkable decision; but its soldier-like firmness was subdued by the teachings of a gentle temper and benevolent spirit.

No sooner was he discovered, than a shout was raised from the *Plaza*, which he acknowledged by uncovering his head and gracefully waving his chapeau towards the multitude, while the sun shone upon his flowing white hair, giving it the hue and brightness of silver.

"Peace, *mes enfans*," he said, in a tone of dignified yet gentle command; "I am informed that certain strangers have landed in our province under the flag of Spain, and are even now approaching the town. Let them come peaceably. Let not a weapon be drawn to oppose or intimidate them. Their mission is peaceful, or ~~they~~ would be better supported than I am told they are. Leave them with me, with whom, doubtless, their business lies, and I will see that my children come to no harm, and that the honour of our country be sacredly maintained. Ha! they are already at hand. Fontney," he added, in a lower tone, turning to an officer who stood near him, "see that the groom leads my horse round to the palace gate! I will meet them mounted like themselves."

While he was yet speaking, there were approaching, at a slow pace, along the river road, two horsemen, who, from the distance formally preserved between them, were plainly of different rank. The foremost, who also seemed, from his bearing and age, which might be about forty-one or two, to be of the

highest consideration, was dressed in the cloth armour worn by Spanish cavaliers of the time, enriched with gold, and shining with polished steel ; his head was covered with a light casque of glittering steel, and a short cloak of crimson velvet fell with graceful negligence from his left shoulder. The saddle and housings of his horse, which touched the earth with dainty steps, as if it spurned the ground and fain would tread the air, were equally costly with the apparel of the rider ; his whole body, save alone his arched neck, being covered with a fly-net of silver threads, through which appeared the raven hue of his glossy hide, shining like floss. His attendant wore a curiously-fashioned suit of green and scarlet, with the shield of Spain emblazoned on his breast, while the crest of the same royal arms was embroidered on the cuffs of his surcoat. In his left hand he bore a spear, about which was rolled a gorgeous banner. Besides a sword suspended at his belt, there hung at his saddle-bow a silver trumpet, chased with enormous royal devices. The housings of his saddle also bore, elaborately wrought in silver, the same regal insignia. But what more especially fixed the attention of the observing townsmen, and created no slight degree of sensation in their bosoms, was a body-guard of twelve halberdiers, of gigantic stature, armed to the teeth, and carrying shining battle-axes in their hands, marching a few paces in the rear of the two horsemen.

In the mean while, the venerable marquis had mounted his horse in the entrance of the *porte cochere*, and, sallying into the square, no sooner discovered this formidable escort of the cavaliers, than he commanded the captain of the guard to form his men into a line in front of the palace, and hold himself in readiness to give them, if necessary, a hostile reception. Then riding a little way in advance of his brave old guard, he stopped, facing the strangers ; and, surrounded by his officers, the gentlemen of his household, and a thousand hearts that were beating with anxious expectancy, awaited their approach.

When the Spaniards reached the termination of the road on the verge of the square, they came to a halt. The foremost, after communicating in a few words with the horseman in his rear, then unfolded a small white flag, and rode forward, looking about him with careless ease as he pranced along into the thronged Plaza. As he advanced, the crowd gave way on either hand, leaving a broad path open up to the very presence of the governor. When he had got within five yards of the marquis, he reined his blood horse in so shortly, though he scarce seemed to press the bridle, that the animal reared with his fore feet in the air, and threatened for an instant to fall backward on his rider; but, while poised with this dangerous inclination to the rearward, with a sharp blow of his spurred heel he compelled him to leap fearfully forward; then, with an almost imperceptible touch of the snaffle, and a single word, caused the spirited animal to stand as still as if he had suddenly been converted into stone. After this brief passage of horsemanship, he waved his snowy pennon above his head, and the remaining horseman, galloping across the square, took up a position in his rear. Then, at a sign from the cavalier, he disengaged his trumpet from his saddle-bow, and blew upon it three loud blasts, such as a conqueror gives when he demands the surrender of a beleaguered city.

The Spanish cavalier now rose in his stirrups, and proclaimed, in a loud voice,

"I, Garcia Ramarez, count of Osma, in the name, and by command of his Catholic majesty, Carlos the Third, king of Spain, do herewith demand of Eugene Chartres, marquis de la Caronde, late governor under France of this province of Louisiana, that he forthwith surrender the government thereof to the crown of Spain and into my hands, as the representative of the said power: the demand and surrender being in accordance with the late peace made between Spain and France, and the terms and conditions of the treaty."

As he ceased, the pursuivant—such his office show-

ed him to be—blew three blasts still louder than the first on his trumpet, and, at a signal from the Count of Ramirez, unfolded from the spear a silken flag, on which were represented, in the richest tints, the gorgeous arms of Spain. Elevating it above his head, he flung its broad folds wide to the morning breeze, while a murmur of indignation and surprise, like the sound of an approaching tempest, rolled sullenly across the Place d'Armes. The Marquis de la Caronde pressed his sword-hilt with a firmer grasp; but age had tempered the fire of his blood, and, without betraying farther emotion, he calmly waited the issue. Without heeding these palpable manifestations of resentment, the Spaniard extended his hand towards the flag, and cried, "Behold the insignia of Spain and the emblem of possession! Hear ye, all men present! I, Garcia Ramirez, in the name of his Catholic majesty, do now take possession of this province of Louisiana for the crown of Spain. God and Don Carlos!"

No sooner had the last words passed the lips of the haughty Spaniard, than the indignant governor, his brow crimsoned with shame at the insult, and his eye flashing with the fires of stern resentment, replied in a voice that rung defiance:

"Sir Spaniard, thou hast hardly weighed the odds, that thou comest to insult France in my person. Neither of treaty nor of the ceding of provinces have I heard until now! Eugene Chartres must have higher and less questionable authority than thine, Count Osma, ere he give to Spain what he hath sworn to keep for France. Depart, sir, with this answer."

"Heed thy words, signor marquis, lest they become darts to pierce thine own bosom," retorted the Spaniard, his brow darkening. "That peace hath been ratified between Spain and France is true, on my honour as a Castilian knight and gentleman. Ha! did you speak, signor?"

"I did merely ask my friend, the Baron de Thoyras, by my side, if it were not the Count of Ramirez who slew his own brother, and kept an uncle shut up

in his strong tower at Osma, until death took pity on him and gave him freedom. I did but ask this, and no more, Sir Spaniard," replied the marquis, with the cool, cutting irony of tone and manner that it would seem, none knew better how to employ.

"Humph! And what said your friend in reply?" asked the immoveable Spaniard.

"That I was right; the name of that Castilian knight and gentleman being Garcia Ramarez."

"What bearing has this upon the present, signor marquis?" demanded Ramarez, haughtily, biting his lip to conceal the effect of the noble Frenchman's words.

"No more than this: If the honour of a 'Castilian knight and gentleman,' which you have pledged to us in attestation of your veracity, be of no better metal than the honour of the only one whom I have the pleasure to know," added the governor, bowing low to the Count of Osma, "why, we had as well have your naked word; for, though it may be a good round lie, it will come coupled with no perjury."

The Count of Ramarez turned pale. The words of the marquis had poisoned his heart, and his brow grew dark with revenge. After a moment's silence, during which he succeeded in keeping down and shutting within his bosom all signs of emotion, he drew a packet from his breast, and, tossing it on the ground at the feet of the governor's horse, said, in an even voice,

"There lie papers that confirm what I have said; though think not," he added, proudly, "that a Ramarez would produce written vouchers for his spoken word."

"Thy parchments hold as little weight with me as thy speech," said the governor, reining back as if he would terminate the controversy. "Until I receive from my own good king the command to surrender this province to thy Spanish king, I shall hold it until the last drop of blood in my veins sink into its sand."

"You forget, signor marquis, that the dungeons of the Moro lie between thy paltry province and the court of Versailles," said the Castilian, with a menace

in the quiet tone of voice in which he uttered the warning.

"They are not so deep as those of Osma, count," retorted the governor, with a smile that awakened the revengeful spirit of his antagonist.

With eyes burning like those of a tiger in his lair, and lips compressed with concentrated rage, he levelled his sword and drove his spurs deep into the sides of his horse, to bound forward and reach the veteran marquis. The animal had scarce moved a muscle to obey his fierce will, when the bridle was caught close to the bit by a strong hand, and the horse thrust back upon his haunches with such sudden force that the rider rolled from the saddle to the earth: the next instant a foot was pressed firmly on his breast, and the point of his own sword was at his throat.

"Hold, Renault!" cried the governor to the person whose skill and address had doubtless saved his life, so unexpected to him was the Spaniard's abortive attack; "let him rise up! In Heaven's name, we want no crossing blades with them if they will go in peace."

The person addressed was a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, seemingly perfect in face and figure: as symmetrical in limb as a young Apollo, while neither Greek nor Circassian ever presented to the sculptor's chisel a finer head or a nobler profile. His eyes were black, and his hair vied with the plumage of the raven's wing in its jetty hue. His complexion was dark, very dark; yet through the brown of his manly cheek the red blood was seen as if through a shadow, and richer far for the softness it lent to it. At the command of the governor he stepped back from the humbled Spaniard; and, taking up a slender pike, such as was used by the *courreurs du bois*, or hunters of the prairies, which he had dropped on seizing the horse, disappeared amid the crowd.

The Count of Osma rose slowly from the earth, and, casting about him a glance of defiance, remounted his steed, and was preparing to turn from the spot, when his eye lighted on a flagstaff near him in front of the

quarters of the governor, on the lofty summit of which floated the snow-white ensign of France. He instantly changed his intention, and, turning towards the spot where he had left his halberdiers, made a signal with his glove, when they rapidly advanced towards him, and formed immediately in his rear, presenting a formidable front to any opponents. They were men of huge stature, and formed both for strength and activity. Besides their halberds or steel battle-axes, each carried, slung across his back, a short arquebuss, and wore at his side a ponderous sword, sheathed in a massive iron scabbard. Breastplates of untanned hide covered their broad chests. On their shoulders and the upper parts of their arms they wore iron pieces; while their heads were protected by scull-caps, woven close with wire, so as to be at the same time both light in weight, and capable of resisting a heavy stroke from any formidable weapon. Their looks were as stern as their garniture was warlike; while mustaches and long heavy beards gave to their visages a still more formidable appearance. It was plain that they had been chosen for the present occasion, and were a sort of gentlemen not to be lightly roused.

The public square in which the meeting between these rival governors of France and Spain took place was near the centre of the city, on one side bounded by the river, and on the opposite one by the Cathedral and governor's palace; while the two remaining sides, facing north and south, were enclosed by Morisco-looking mansions, with deep, narrow windows defended by iron bars, vast portals opening into inner courts, light verandahs, and flat roofs, and adorned with urns and fantastic battlements, every available place upon which was thronged with interested spectators of the scene in the *Plaza* beneath. Near the centre of this square, a little to the left, was the flagstaff, on which floated, like a white cloud, the spotless banner of France.

The Spaniard waited until his men had reached him, when, with a single bound of his horse, he placed

himself at the foot of the staff, and, at one stroke of his sword, severed the cord that kept the flag in its elevated position, so that, fluttering and wildly floating in the air, it descended like a stricken swan to the ground. Ere it reached the earth it was caught by the herald, and placed beneath him across his saddle. Before several young townsmen could spring forward to snatch it from its ignominious situation, by a bold leap of his horse he placed the halberdiers between himself and their vengeance, and gained the foot of the staff beside the knight.

"Ha, Caravello! you are at hand just as you are wanted. Give me the Spanish flag! Halberds, form close around me, and cleave to the chine whoever dares attempt to break your front. Now for Don Carlos and Spain!"

With coolness and rapidity, he now began to attack the Spanish colours to the line, the halberdiers at the same time presenting with their glittering battle-axes a bristling crescent on the side towards the governor and his guards; and, before the latter could recover from their surprise at this manœuvre, or divine his intentions, he had firmly fastened the flag to the dissevered cord. The next instant they beheld it rising swiftly into the air.

"Death and St. Denis! He has done it in our faces! Charge them, my brave guards!" cried the marquis, brandishing his sword and riding against the firm phalanx of halberdiers; while his guards, with loud cries, pressed forward to the rescue of their dishonoured flag, and to avenge the insult it had received.

Their advance, however, was soon checked by a loud shout of triumph from the multitude; and, reining up within five feet of the immoveable halberdiers, the governor followed the direction of all eyes upward, and beheld the Spanish ensign, ere yet it had reached the summit of the pole, floating loose through the air, and a light *courreur's* spear still vibrating in the mast.

"Renault, the Quadroon! Bravo! vive Renault!" was heard from a hundred tongues, while the surprised

Spaniard, into whose hands the severed cord had dropped, watched eagerly the course of the silken banner, as, flashing in the morning sun, and gorgeous as a rainbow, it floated off on the gentle winds. The stern halberdiers and the veteran guard both arresting themselves in full career, and alike forgetful of their hostile attitude, together with the whole multitude, turned their gaze upward to this interesting object.

Now whirling round and round in wild gyrations ; now sailing outspread on the bosom of the wind ; now rustling its folds together, as the breeze turned it in its flight, the beautiful thing floated long above the square. At one moment it would sweep low over the heads of the people ; then, mocking their grasp, again rise rapidly, in its ascent flying almost within reach of the hand of some fair lady on the balconies.

The Spaniard watched its erratic motions with an earnest and anxious gaze, aware of the ignominious destiny that awaited it should it fall among the hostile crowd ; and once, as it swept past near his head, he vainly attempted to secure it with his sword, but, only piercing it, it eluded him, amid the derisive laugh of the multitude. On his part, the noble old governor enjoyed, with the keenest satisfaction, the defeat of the Spaniard's object, and watched, with the eagerness of a delighted child, its sportive circles through the air.

Standing on the battlement of one of the dwellings on the south side of the square was a very young girl of exceeding beauty ; but, from the deep brown of her cheek, and her flashing, dark eyes, as well as from the costume of her head, it was clear that she was a *quadroone*. Twice the winds had wafted their silken plaything almost within her reach, and now swept it a third time close above her head, and bore it past her in the direction of a square tower that rose from the midst of the roof. Every eye watched its course with breathless eagerness. It touched the tower—fluttered an instant—and then a shout, mingled with the deep execrations of the Spaniards, announced that it had become entangled on a projecting point of the

stone. Instantly several young men were seen scaling the front of the dwelling, aided by the light columns of the verandah and the bars of the barricaded windows.

"*Les frères ! vivant les frères !*" was heard on every tongue, and all eyes were directed towards the daring young men, who were seven in number, that appeared on all parts of the front of the edifice, in ambitious and reckless rivalry to reach the flag. While they were ascending, the quadroone girl, by an inner staircase leading from the roof, gained the top of the tower. Boldly stepping on the verge, she reached down, and with great peril extricated the ensign. Then waving it once in triumph, she placed it beneath her symmetrical little feet, and indignantly trampled upon it.

"*Vive, Azèlie ! vive ! bravissima !*" rose tumultuously from the crowd below, and at the same instant the young men gained the battlement.

One or two of them were preparing to surmount the tower, when she cried with a lofty energy, that, either from the manner in which she spoke, or from the extreme beauty of the speaker, singularly enforced their attention,

"Stop, messieurs ! The flag is mine, and shall be given only to the defenders of our fair province. Swear that you will hold Louisiana free of Spain and all other power, save God and France, and it shall be yours !"

Her voice rung with the rich clearness of a clarion, and her words were distinctly heard by those who stood on the opposite side of the *Plaza*.

There was a smile of surprise on the faces of the young nobles as she ceased, but the lovely girl was a favourite with all ; and, with the native gallantry of their chivalrous land, now challenged both by patriotism and beauty, they, with one mind, felt inspired to give solemnity and importance to what they at first viewed with levity, and, in an elevated and serious tone, answered,

"We swear !"

And, laying their right hands one upon the other, they solemnly bowed their heads upon them : then placing them upon their hearts, they looked up to Heaven in attestation of their truth.

"Then receive, each of ye noble youths, these badges in remembrance of your oath."

As she spoke, she rent the flag into eight scarves, and, casting one across her own bosom, threw the rest from the tower at the feet of the young men. A loud murmur of applause filled the air at this action, and, taking up the brilliant scarves, they bound them across their breasts. At this instant the report of some firearm was heard from the square, and the quadroone, with a thrilling shriek, fell back upon the tower.

Every eye was turned upon the Spaniard, whom, with a look of malicious triumph, they beheld in the act of returning to a halberdier a blunderbuss which he had discharged at her, as, relieved against the sky, she presented a prominent mark to his deadly aim, and a suitable victim to his vengeance.

"Do them to the death !" cried the governor ; "close in upon the demons ! Cut in pieces the Spanish hounds."

"Be firm and close about me, halberds ! Present them your faces, and retreat slowly," ordered the Spaniard, coolly, as if most at home when dangers thickened about him. "Meet their charge with your battle-axes, but let not a man leave his place to follow up a blow. Keep firm and steady, and we shall yet leave far behind us this pack of French wolves."

Led on by the marquis, the French guard rushed forward with fierce cries ; and, while the old warrior sought to reach the Spanish chief, his men became furiously engaged hand to hand, helm to helm, with the slowly-retreating halberdiers, who kept firmly together in line, defending themselves with ponderous blows of their battle-axes.

For a few moments the *mêlée* was terrific. The roar of the heavy muskets of the guard, the sharp ring of pistols, the clashing of swords, and the dull

sound of the strokes of the battle-axes, as they sunk into breast or scull, were for a few seconds unceasing. The marquis having made several ineffectual attempts to break through the halberdiers, at length, by making a *detour* by their flank, succeeded in getting near the Count of Ramarez. With his herald by his side, the latter was slowly retreating, step by step, at the head of his men, coolly giving his orders, and enjoining them to keep shoulder to shoulder, and steadily fall back upon him; while, at times, seeing them hard pressed, he would make in person a fierce charge upon the guards, and, dispersing them, resume his station, and conduct the retreat in the same regular order as before.

"Now shalt thou die the death, Count of Osma!" shouted the old warrior, as he found the path open between himself and the Spaniard.

Throwing his body far forward on the horse as he spoke, he spurred towards him and made a desperate lunge at his breast; but his sword met the resistance of a shirt of mail worn beneath his splendid apparel, and broke short to the hilt. The force of the blow, nevertheless, nearly unhorsed the Spaniard, who, speedily recovering his seat, dealt in return so well-aimed a stroke upon the head of his antagonist, that he was stunned by it, and would have fallen from his saddle but for the support of his stirrup: his terrified horse, at the same time, swerved wildly on one side, and, when he recovered from the shock, which he did in a few seconds, he found himself separated from his antagonist by the intervening bodies of the halberdiers.

At length, after defending themselves desperately against such odds, fighting and winning every inch of ground with their faces towards their enemies, the hard-pressed halberdiers, aided by the skill and coolness of their chief, succeeded, with the loss of two of their number, in extricating themselves from the square, and reaching the entrance to the Borgue road. Here the marquis, who had lost some of his best men

in the fray, finding nothing would be gained by pursuit, recalled the guard, and permitted them to continue their retreat without farther molestation. Not so the Seven Brothers! After delaying to bear the wounded maiden to the rooms below, they now made their appearance in the Place d'Armes. Separating singly, they moved swiftly from group to group, whispering a few words to each young man they met, who, the next moment, silently withdrew and disappeared from the throng.

Weary, wounded, and sore with revenge, the Spaniards retreated rapidly towards the lake. At length, through a distant opening in the trees, they were gladdened with the sight of their little vessel riding at anchor upon its placid breast. They hailed the broad expanse of water with a shout of joy, and with renewed vigour marched towards the glittering beach.

They were yet a mile distant from the barge, when a sound like the trampling of numerous horses fell upon their ears from the direction of the city. Looking round with startled apprehensions, they beheld, to their dismay, a body of fifty horsemen, armed with sabres and courrier-pikes, emerging from the wood and approaching them at full speed. The Count Osma could discern that they were headed by several young men distinguished by crimson scarfs, which were streaming behind them as they rode.

"Fly for your lives, my brave halberds!" he shouted, after watching for a few moments their swift coming. "To the boats! To the boats! We are in no condition to withstand their mad charge."

With this rapid and energetic order he put spurs to his horse, and, urging and encouraging his men forward, fled towards the barge. But, finding the pursuers gained each moment on them, he bade his men do their best if it came to blows, and, leaving them to their fate, galloped onward, accompanied by his herald, at the top of his horse's speed. In vain, however, was the flight of those who were not mounted. Like a whirlwind the pursuing troop came sweeping to-

wards the beach; and, ere the halberdiers could turn to show resistance, they were borne to the ground by the mere weight of numbers, and trampled in the earth by a hundred iron-shod hoofs. The work of death was but of an instant's duration. Their armour was no defence to them—strength and courage of no avail! They fell as if a simoon of the desert had swept over them!

Scarcely without pause, the conquering squadron galloped onward to the lake side, in hot pursuit of the two horsemen, who were flying along the sands as if borne forward on the wings of the wind. The foremost of the pursuers, a dark, handsome youth, undistinguished by a scarf, and armed only with a spear, who seemed to be one of the band that had gained the lead by the superior speed of his horse, at length came near the herald, and shouted to him to rein up. But the fugitive, conspicuous with the white ensign of France still wound about his body, continued to urge his steed forward without heeding the call or looking behind.

"I will soon stop thy flight, gay bird!" said the youth, in a half tone; and rising, as he spoke, in his stirrups, he threw himself far backward to give force and energy to the blow, and launched his light spear with such unerring aim, that, entering his body through the folds of the flag, it passed out a third of its length on the farther side.

"The honour of France is redeemed," he said, coming, with two or three tremendous bounds, alongside of the herald's steed; and, while the two horses were still flying like eagles along the sands, he seized the tottering body, and, tearing the encrimsoned banner from it, hurled it, still warm with life, to the ground.

"*Vive, Renault!*" cried one of the *frères*, getting up with him; "this day hast thou saved the honour of our *belle province*. Thy hand, Renault! The drop of Moorish blood in thy veins shall not come between thee and my love. Let us be friends, brave Renault."

"Noble Charleval, you have made this a happy mo-

ment to me!" answered the youth, grasping the hand extended to receive his with eloquent gratitude.

The young noble, then fastening the flag to his sword, elevated it above his head, and, waving it in triumph, continued his pursuit of the Spanish leader.

Intimidated by the slaughter of his men, and witnessing the fall of his attendant, the Spanish count gored his horse to madness, reached, at length, his barge, and, reckless of all save his own safety, leaped, mounted as he was, into the midst of his men; while his voice, commanding them, with oaths and menaces, to put off from the land, could be heard above the thunder of the hoofs of the pursuing horse. They needed no urging; and, while the horsemen were yet a hundred yards from the water's edge, the boat was full that distance from the land, and its occupant secure from their vengeance. After seeing him embark, and the vessel get under weigh and stand down the lake, the party of horse, which was composed of young townsmen, both creoles and quadroons, hastily raised by the seven young nobles, returned in triumph to the city.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEMAND OF SUBMISSION.

DEFEATED, disgraced, and burning with revenge, caused as much, doubtless, by the indignity offered to his person and authority from his new subjects as by the insult to his country, the Count of Osma retired to the Havanna, whence he shortly afterward proceeded to Spain, for the purpose of returning with a force sufficient to bring the refractory Louisianians into subjection, and avenging himself for his former reception. But other affairs of higher importance then en-

gaging the attention of the Cortes, farther attempts for taking possession of the refractory province were, for the present, suspended.

In the mean while, the citizens of Orleans fortified their town, by erecting a low wall and digging a ditch on the north side, and on the south by barricading the outlets and spaces between the massive Spanish houses that bounded it, which, by their height and the thickness of their walls, presented formidable barriers to any hostile approach. The front on the river, including the public square before the governor's house, was defended by a battery of cannon of heavy calibre, which had been chiefly transferred from the ancient fort of St. John, on Lake Ponchartrain, while the rear was rendered inaccessible by impenetrable cypress forests and numerous lagoons. Every man, from the silver-haired grandsire to the beardless youth, became a citizen soldier, each habitually wearing the harness of warfare in the more peaceful pursuits of his daily handicraft ; and, from the general aspect of things, it appeared to be the determination of the patriotic Orleannois to defend their fair province to the last.

But two years having elapsed without any farther intelligence from the Spaniards, they relaxed their vigilance ; and, by degrees, laying aside its warlike aspect, the city began to wear again its more befitting civic character.

The venerable governor, overcome by the weight of years, and worn out with long service, at length dying, the citizens elected six of the most substantial burghers to constitute a council for their rule and government. This political change, however, was not effected without some opposition on the part of certain of the better-born among the townspeople and a small party of young creoles, who were clamorous for the authority to descend into the hands of the governor's only son, a bold, impetuous, and wild young man, scarcely twenty-three years of age. The elected council, nevertheless, firmly established itself, and the affairs of the city and province went on prosperously, to the great

credit of the chosen rulers, while in the general thrif Spain and its imperious demand was forgotten.

Such was the condition of things, when, in the autumn of 1769, a little more than two years and a half after his defeat and departure, the Spanish governor again made his appearance with a large force before the city, and demanded its surrender. It is at this crisis in the history of Louisiana that the first scene in the second chapter of our story opens.

The Spanish fleet consisted of two brigantines, one carrying ten and the other twelve carronades, a polacca schooner of six guns, and three one-masted gunboats, each mounting a long eighteen-pounder on a pivot in the bows, with an aggregate force on board of seven hundred men, including one hundred and fifty horsemen. On its first arrival it had anchored a league below the city, whence the governor had immediately sent to demand its submission, and to receive, in token thereof, the keys of the government-house and other rooms of state, giving the terrified townsmen the six hours which intervened until sunset to make up their minds, promising them a general amnesty if they quietly submitted, with the menacing alternative of being treated as rebels taken in arms if they refused. This peremptory message was received by the council at noon, and filled the town with consternation and alarm. Throngs of anxious and excited citizens rushed to the *Plaza*, and thence, flowing towards the hall of council, which was in the governor's palace, thrust themselves into the chamber, and by their cries, some for "surrender," others for "defence," completed the disorder that already began to find its way into this body of civic rulers. Five hours of clamorous confusion passed away; the sun, at whose setting their fate was to be decided, was already low in the west, and yet no decisive steps had been taken either to comply with or resist the demand of the Spaniard. As if the apple of discord had been cast into it, the whole city was thrown into a state of the wildest anarchy, and torn by opposing factions;

and, while menaced by a foe without, it seemed on the eve of being a prey to a civil war within. The members of the council, at first divided as their interests or patriotism prompted, or as their fears dictated, now magnanimously forgot themselves, and, acting in concert, patriotically determined to hold the city against all comers, save their royal master Louis Quinze. But the older and more reflecting portion of the citizens themselves, seeing that they were deserted by France, and finding that farther opposition would be not only useless, but draw upon their heads ruinous consequences, were resolutely decided on submitting to the Spanish domain; while many of the young creoles, burning with hostility to Spain, and filled with resentment against France, opposed every measure for surrender, and fearlessly advanced the bold proposition that they should hold out the city and province against both the powers of France and Spain, and constitute themselves a republic. Thus it happened that, between the conflicting voices of three factions, each so opposite to the other, the time set by the Spaniard had nearly expired, and it was not yet determined whether the city should give in its submission, or stand stoutly on its defence. As the hour for returning an answer approached, the council-chamber presented a scene of disorder beyond the control of any authority vested in the members of the council, who, nevertheless, conspicuously seated upon their elevated cushions of crimson damask at the extremity of the hall, maintained their municipal state and civic dignity, and, like a rock against which the vexed surges idly beat, continued to remain firm and unmoved in the position they had assumed, while around them roared and heaved the human sea which the breath of the Spaniard had agitated.

In the midst of this rife confusion and civic anarchy, the report of a heavy gun shook the town. Its effect was electrical. The uproar of voices ceased, as if the angel of silence had waved his wing above the multitude, and every eye was turned in the direction of the

windows that looked towards the setting sun, which, appearing like a vast globe of heated iron suspended in the sky, hung low near the horizon. They saw that in less than half an hour it would disappear in the bosom of the dark forest of cypresses which seemed to girdle the earth; and the reflection that, ere it rose again, their fair city might become the scene of massacre and conflagration, and their hearths desolate, blanched the cheeks of many a husband and father; and some of those present, who, the moment before, were for maintaining the town against all odds, now turned away from the sun to fix their eyes upon the faces of the unwavering council with an imploring eloquence of expression that plainly betrayed the change wrought in their feelings. A second report, still nearer than the first, shook the council-house to its foundations, and had the effect of breaking the silence which the other had produced, for instantly it was answered by a deep murmur from the mass of the people, that soon rose into a wild, inarticulate cry, mingled with stern and fierce words.

"There spoke loud warning, citizens," said the president of the council, rising, and waving his hand which held his baton of office, to command attention; "warning and menace to all traitors to France. If ye be true men and loyal, fly forthwith to the defences, and maintain the town!"

"To the defences, to the defences!" shouted a tall, dark young man, with a flowing crimson feather, tipped with sable, in his slouched hat, as he forced his way towards the door with the hilt, and even the sharp point of his sword, closely followed by a score of young men, who manifested as little regard for the flesh and doubts of those burghers who stood in their path as did their leader; but no one of the steadier citizens moved to second them, and the shouts of those reckless gallants were drowned in the overwhelming cry from a thousand voices of "No defence! no defence!"

"Children of France, will ye become serfs to Spain?" suddenly cried a youth, in a plain gray capote, who

did not seem to be of their party, but whose words showed that he also was for holding the town, though it might be from other motives than those which governed the band of young men ; " will ye tarnish yonder spotless standard, that floats in the evening sun like a silver cloud ? Shall the Spaniard again make a saddlecloth of the colours of France ? Shame on ye, Orleanois ! Shame on ye, Frenchmen ! Shame on ye, Louisianians ! How will your faces redden with the blush of degradation when in the morning you behold the flaunting ensign of Spain waving where yesterday your country's banner waved ! To the defences ! to the defences ! "

" *Vive Spain ! vive France ! no Renault ; no quadroon ! vive la republique !* " confusedly filled the apartment from the various factions at these words, while the uproar was so loud that the firing of a third gun was only made manifest by a vivid flash like lightning illuminating the hall, the extremities of which were already cast into gloom by the advancing shadows of evening. At the same instant, a loud and appalling cry of " The Spaniard ! The Spaniard ! " rent the air from the multitude in the *Plaza* beneath, and, reaching the ears of those within the council-chamber, the news flew from lip to lip like wildfire.

" They come ! They come ! " were the thrilling words that re-echoed through the vaulted chamber ; and the alarmed citizens, rushing to the windows and balconies of the hall that overlooked the port, beheld with fear and apprehension a Spanish brigantine of war standing up the river under easy sail, with the gay colours of Spain unfolded, and proudly flying above her decks. Before they could interchange glances of surprise and consternation with each other at this hostile spectacle, which, though anticipated, was not now viewed without emotion, another vessel hove in sight from behind the southern turret of the *Alaméda*, with the same royal ensign flashing in the sun that marked the nation of the first ; then came, not twice her length behind, a light-rigged schooner, with slender masts like

pencils, and with the gliding motion of a swan, slowly followed, one after the other, by three gunboats, each moving steadily onward under the pressure of a clumsy latteen sail. The level beams of the setting sun, already broken by the irregular outlines of the forest into which it was sinking, were gilding sail and streaming pennant, flashing back from a thousand points of steel on their decks, and exhibiting to the eyes of the citizens their dark sides bristling with guns and lined with armed men. After passing a little farther up the river, in full view of every foreboding eye, at a signal from the leading vessel, the whole squadron rounded to and dropped anchor opposite the governor's palace, with its broadsides bearing upon the town.

CHAPTER III.

SCENE IN THE COUNCIL-CHAMBER.

THESE hostile proceedings had been watched in silence from the council-chamber up to this moment; but now the excitement and alarm became terrific. There was but one cry to be heard above all others, and this was for instant *surrender*! To increase the universal consternation, a boat filled with men, and bearing the Spanish flag at the stern, was seen to put off from the larger brigantine, and rapidly to approach the shore. At this crisis, those careful citizens who believed the preservation of their goods, families, and homes, as well as their own safety, depended on submission to the Spanish dominion, became convinced of the necessity of immediate action; and, resolving to give up the town at all hazards, they were prepared even to sacrifice their rulers, should such a step become necessary to effect their objects. Pressing back into the hall, they thronged the forum, and loudly call-

ed upon them to give up the city. In vain were the voices of the firm and loyal council raised to inspire them, even at this last hour, with a spirit of resistance.

"Surrender ! Surrender !" was the response that sternly and menacingly met their words.

"Never !" cried the president of the council, in a loud voice, which was responded to, not less resolutely, by his colleagues.

"What hinders us, fellow-citizens, from dragging them down from their crimson cushions, and casting them into the dungeons of the Calaboose if they refuse ?" cried the young creole with the crimson plume, in a tone as threatening as his language.

"Be it so !" firmly responded the undaunted president ; "but never shall the province of Louisiana, or the fair name of France, be dishonoured while it is in our power to maintain either."

"Bear down the tyrannical burghers ! Down with the false councillors ! They count our blood as water ! We will be our own judges in this matter !" cried the infuriated townsmen, pressing forward upon the steps of the forum.

Here, each man as firm as his chief, stood the city rulers, breasting, with a moral grandeur that could have been the effect only of the purest patriotism, the rage of their fellow-citizens, and ready even to make sacrifice of life in defence of the lofty position they had conscientiously assumed ; for, by an unaccountable silence on the part of France towards the provincials in relation to their transfer, they had yet received no official intimation of it, and had no other ground to believe that such a cession had been made than what was implied in the haughty demand of Spain. Therefore, they resolutely and heroically determined to maintain the province and its capital until they should be formally commanded by France to surrender it to the Spaniard. In the midst of these outcries, several men, more bold or infuriated than their fellows, leaped upon the forum, and one of them violently laid his hand upon the breast of the president.

"What would you, citizens," he demanded, in an elevated but composed tone of voice, without attempting to resist his rude violence, "that you bay us like wolves? We but do our duty as your rulers!"

"Down with such rulers! We want no one to rule over us! Hurl them from the forum!" was shouted from one extremity of the hall to the other.

"Get possession of the keys," cried a short, swarthy creole, with a lurking eye like a snake's, and a forbidding countenance, in a voice that rose above every other in the crowd; "the Spaniard will receive these signs of submission from us as well from those gray-beards. Holla, Carra!" he continued, to the man who held the president in his grasp, "if they will not yield them quietly, take them by force."

"The keys! Seize the keys!" resounded from a thousand tongues; and the man who had been addressed by name released his hold to wrest them from his girdle, where, in anticipation of the demand for them, the resolute ruler had placed them for safe-keeping but a few moments before; but they were too securely attached to it by a chain of steel to yield to his extraordinary efforts to tear them away. As he was about to make use of harsher means to gain possession of them, the low, swart individual who had given the order to seize them, having with great exertions succeeded in forcing his way through the tumultuous throng, sprung like a lynx upon the forum. Then drawing a dagger, he cut the belt that held them with so free a hand, that the blood gushed forth from the side of the president, and, dying the keys with crimson, trickled freely to the ground. Instantly the arm that dealt the blow was seized with a grasp so strong, that the reeking weapon dropped from the unnerved fingers to his feet.

"Assassin! would you slay the old man?" demanded, at the same time, a voice of mingled indignation and horror, as the other staggered backward with the force with which the speaker hurled him from him.

"Ha, Quadroon!" he cried, fixing upon him a glance

of deadly hostility; "thou shalt die for this!" The individual addressed, who was distinguished by a gray capote negligently dropping from his left shoulder, steadily met for an instant his vindictive gaze; and then, without replying, save by a slightly contemptuous curl of his lip, turned to the wounded president, and asked, with sympathy as tender as his indignation at the act of the assassin had been stern,

"Thou art not much hurt, I trust, venerable sir?"

"No, Renault! no, boy! It might have been a deeper cut but for my stout leathern belt; for it was given with a good will and ready hand. As it is, 'tis a mere needle scratch."

"I will support thee, councillor!"

"Nay, good Renault, I need not thy arm. See, thou hast already incurred their wrath. Take heed to thyself, rather. Hear their cries! Will not even the blood of their president appease their ferocity?"

"Give them the keys, father," said the young man, as the cries for them grew louder and fiercer. "It is in vain to attempt to withstand this tornado of human passion. Ha, Rascas, that blow was not so steadily aimed as thy first one!" he cried, arresting an uplifted dagger in the grasp of the revengeful creole who had wounded the president; "an old man's breast is a better mark for thee than a young one's, who has an eye to make thine quail and an arm quick enough to turn aside a dagger from his heart!"

As he spoke, he cast at his feet, for the second time, the stiletto that before had been evidently aimed at the president's life under the mask of securing the keys; and the foiled assassin, maddened with rage and disappointment, with a vow of fearful vengeance upon his tongue, leaped from the forum and disappeared among the crowd.

"Thou hast, in defending me, placed thy life in peril, brave Renault," said the president; "leave me, lest your blood be on my head!"

"Heed me not, venerable sir! Hear! they still demand the keys of the Government House and

treasury! Thou canst no longer defend them but with madness! Give them up, sir; save thy life and those of thy colleagues, who, not less firm than thyself, will nevertheless yield if thou dost!"

"Be it so, Renault," answered the president, with emotion; "the time has at length come for gray hairs to learn wisdom from youth, and councillors to be led by the son of a bondwoman. Nay, Renault, I would not offend thee by my words! It shall be as these madmen wish, who, if they may be suffered to hold their household goods in peace, are content to become base servitors in the halls of the Spaniards. I would rather my own wealthy bazar should be despoiled, my own dear fireside made desolate by the Castilian invader, and myself left without roof or rood, than consent voluntarily to this degrading submission. But be it as they cry out! Yet first I will return my staff and seal of office to those from whom I derived them. Behold, ye Orleannois!" he cried, stretching forth his arms to command their attention.

Then, solemnly taking from his hand his magisterial signet-ring, on which were cut the arms of France, he cast it into the midst of the people, disrobed himself of his black gown, and broke in two pieces across the railings of the forum his snow-white baton, which was sprinkled with his own blood. Casting them on the ground, he trampled them, with his robe, beneath his feet, and continued,

"Behold, *thus* do I dissolve the provincial council of which ye are no longer worthy, and solemnly extinguish my office. Those crimson stains on ring and baton do bear honourable witness that your council have well maintained the honour of their city. That council has now ceased to exist, and you are free to fasten the yoke of Spain upon each others' necks. Witness all of ye! that we pronounce ourselves clear of this act of submission, and do wash our hands of it before ye all. There lie the keys of your city at my feet! Let him who is the basest slave among ye lift them! Heaven grant, the dishonour that will have

come to them this day be washed away by the honest blood with which they are stained !”

There was a moment of irresolution at these words on the part of those who crowded the forum, no man present desiring to obtain possession of the keys at the expense of the personal odium his words conveyed. But the inaction was not of long duration ; for an extraordinary-looking being, accoutred in a motley garb of many colours, and wearing a fantastic, high-crowned red cap upon his head, his broad, farcical face expressing mingled cunning and idiocy, leaped like a cat from the embrasure of the window above the forum, whence he had been hitherto delightedly surveying the exciting scene beneath, and lighted upon his feet in the midst.

“ *Bon diable !*” he cried, in a singularly hoarse, grating voice, “ shall we fear to touch the jinglers, gossips, now old white pow has done with 'um ?”

“ Lift them, Gobin ! lift them !” cried those around him, as if his presence had suddenly relieved them from an unenenviable responsibility.

“ Gobin's got the state-ring,” he said, holding up his fore finger, and exhibiting the broad carnelion signet which the governor had cast away, and of which he had unaccountably possessed himself ; “ make me governor till the black Don comes to land, and I will take up the keys !”

“ *Vive Governor Gobin !* bravo, motley !” shouted the multitude, between jest and earnest.

With a hoarse shriek of laughter he acknowledged their assent, and, snatching the massive keys from the floor, held them up for an instant before all eyes, and then shook them, with idiotic glee, triumphantly in the air. At this act, deafening cries of “ *Vive Gobin !*”

Vive the new governor !” filled the hall, amid which the idiot or jester, for his character seemed not to be accurately defined, attached them nimbly to the longest fragment of the broken baton, arranged his grotesque person in the cast-off robe of the president, and, lifting the staff high in his hand, bounded from the forum upon the level shoulders of the crowd.

With loud hurrahs, and cries of "Bear him to the Spaniard!" the multitude carried him above their heads through the midst of the hall towards the door, that they might, without farther delay, as evening was rapidly approaching, lay the tokens of their submission at the feet of the Spanish governor. Before, however, they could reach the outlet of the council-room, intelligence came that the boat they had seen put off from the brigantine had touched the shore, and landed two Spanish cavaliers, with a small party of soldiers, who at that moment were together advancing across the Alameda towards the council-hall.

This announcement of the immediate presence of their new masters had the effect of sobering, in a degree, the agitated temper of the multitude; and cool reflection on the position in which they had placed themselves in relation to the Spaniards, took place of the excited feelings by which they had hitherto been governed. The power that they so fiercely had sought, now that it was in their possession, they trembled to make use of; and, as the moment for transferring their allegiance to Spain approached, many of those who, a brief while before, were the most violent for this abject step, now felt returning patriotism, and were ready, had it not been too late, to stand by the councillors, and cheerfully aid them in maintaining the town. This feeling of degradation was mingled with a certain kind of shame, when their eyes rested on the grotesque figure and grinning visage of their mock-governor, who, they keenly felt, was now their only head until the possession of the Spaniard; and those who immediately supported him on their shoulders, beginning also to entertain some not very flattering notions of the pageant they were acting, would have let him down bodily to the ground. But, divining their purpose, the obstinate dignitary clung to their necks, with his long, pliant feet, like a monkey, and, rapping them over the head with his baton, bade them uphold their lord and governor on peril of a broken scone.

A retreating movement of the throng about the en-

trance, such as subjects make when their masters walk among them—for so early did the townsmen begin to manifest the cringing spirit of subjection—now caused every anxious eye to turn in expectation and with feverish curiosity towards that quarter. Amid the momentary deep silence that at once settled over the multitude was heard a rattling of swords, spurs, and armour, and the heavy tread of soldiers approaching through the paved corridor. In an instant afterward there appeared in the doorway two Spanish cavaliers, attended by a trumpeter and a guard of halberdiers. The eldest of the two, whose locks were just touched with silver where they had escaped from beneath his helmet, was a handsome, bold-looking gentleman, richly attired and gay with diamonds, chains, and nodding plumes, with a stout sword at his side and pistols in his belt ; while the younger, whose years could not have exceeded twenty-two, wore a plain undress of blue cloth and an unornamented cap of the same colour, and carried at his side only a slight small-sword in a highly-polished steel sheath. But the plainness of his attire served rather to display than obscure a form and face which seemed to have been moulded to present to every eye the perfection of manly beauty.

They paused a moment on the threshold, and surveyed with astonishment the disorganized multitude which their eyes encountered, in the place of the orderly body of submissive councilmen they had expected to meet, ready to tender them, on bended knees, the keys of the city.

For an instant they appeared to be overcome with surprise ; but, as if readily appreciating the cause of so singular a scene, they advanced boldly into the chamber, as far as the lane opened for them by the submissive and awed townsmen would permit, and then looked towards the forum as if to discover a head to the multitude. But, seeing it also occupied by the crowd, the eldest demanded, in a high and haughty tone, who were the chief men of the province. There was no response ; for mingled fear and shame kept the

people silent ; while one or two bared daggers displayed in the hands of those near him, and the menacing looks of others, intimidated the jester, who, waving his baton aloft, was on the eve of making answer himself to the demand.

("Have ye no ears ? or do your tongues refuse their office ?" said the cavalier, with irony ; "where hide your rulers, that they do not appear and tender their submission to Spain ?" he demanded, casting a stern and inquiring glance around upon them.

Every face was involuntarily turned towards the forum, where, nearly hidden by the throng, stood, in grave silence, the president with his council ; and loud cries of "Give back, citizens, let them be seen !" at once placed them in view before the retiring crowd, and enabled the glance of the Spaniard, thither also directed by theirs, to rest for the first time on this dignified body.

"Ha ! well discovered, signors !" he said, on recognising their late official character by the black gowns they had not, like their chief, yet thrown aside. "By the mass ! we owe you little courtesy for the grace of our reception. But let that pass ! we shall have time and occasion to better your manners when we shall have settled the government. I come now to receive your submission. Methinks, the sun being down, it should be ready. So, give your attention, and hear ! In the name of his Catholic majesty, Carlos III., king of Spain, I, Louis Garcilaso, do demand the surrender, presently, of this province of Louisiana, to his just rule and right ; El Excmo. Señor Conde de Osma, grande de España de primera clase, gentil-hombre de Camara de S. M. con exercicio, &c., being appointed governor thereof !"

"Sir Spaniard," answered the president, with quiet dignity of manner, but not without evincing in the tones of his voice some mortified feeling, "in us you address but the semblance of power ! The provincial council is dissolved, and its authority returned to the people who gave it. They will themselves confer

with you, and doubtless will do it through the agency of yonder excellent personage, whom, with more justice than they are conscious of, they have invested with our late honours and authority."

The Spaniard's eyes followed the glance of the sarcastic speaker towards a quarter of the council-chamber where, hitherto concealed from his view by a massive column that intervened, as well as by the obscurity into which the twilight had cast that part of the hall, was the jester elevated above the heads of the crowd, and holding aloft proudly, and, seemingly to himself, with great dignity, the broken baton, with the state keys dangling from its extremity. For a few seconds the astonished gaze of the Spaniard continued to be riveted on the remarkable object it had so unexpectedly encountered. Gobin no sooner saw that he was regarded, than he made some attempts to arrange the folds of the black robe about his parti-coloured person, settled his peaked cap more firmly on his head, and, making a prefatory jingling of his keys, cried out, in a loud voice,

"Gramercy, brother Spaniard! We give thee peace and welcome, thou and the rogues at thy back! albeit we have a mind not to treat with thee, inasmuch as thou hast but now discovered our august presence. Approach and kneel, cap in hand, before us, and, peradventure, it may be, we will graciously look over this offence!" Thus speaking, he flourished his keys in the air, and rapped smartly his supporters over the shoulders for endangering his equilibrium while he was in the midst of his luminous address.

The Spaniard's brow darkened, and his eyes flashed fire, while his young companion smiled with humour at this ludicrous turn of the negotiation.

"Are we mocked?" he cried, in a voice that rung through the vaulted hall.

"Gently, sweet cousin! Be not ireful, lest it hinder digestion! We will have nothing eaten in our realm that is not like to be well digested; nor will we let any man be choleric. Fair and softly, brother! Go-

chief, sullenly retired, bearing him in their midst up the square towards the Cathedral. In the deep shadow of its tower stood a group of horses saddled and bridled, on which they threw themselves, still bearing their leader, and, galloping through the town, were soon lost to the eye and ear; while those partisans among the populace who had lingered behind to witness the conflict precipitately fled through the narrow streets, leaving the advancing Spaniards, who numbered about one hundred men, to take undisputed possession of the *Plaza*. It was with an exclamation of surprise and horror that the Spanish leader beheld, when he reached the fountain, the bodies of the halberdiers and creoles strewn about, clinching each other in the hostile embrace of death, showing how warmly, and at what expense of life, the sanguinary contest had been maintained by both parties.

"Here hath been massacre most foul!" he cried, as the ghastly forms of the slaughtered were exhibited to his eyes by the clear moonlight of the moon, which shone almost with the brightness of day upon the square; "not one remaineth! Sancta Maria, save us! If there lieth not Don Garcilaso, with his back against the marble where he hath fallen! Lift him, and see if he lives! By the cross of St. Andrew, this night's work hath hung half Orleans by the neck ere sunset to-morrow!"

"There is life in him, signor," answered one of the soldiers, "but he hath lost much blood."

"Bear him to the brigantine, that he may presently have the benefit of the skill of the surgeon. There, too, glitter the keys, for which, doubtless, he hath been assailed. Hand them hither, that I may take them to Ramirez, for they betoken the city's surrender. Don Henrique is missing too! Turn over every body on the square! if he be among them, the bourgeois of Orleans had best let in the river through their dikes, and die of honest suffocation, for they are sure to die, every mother's son of them, by the gallows' rope else. Osma will roar like a lion when he heareth this!"

479 - 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

After a long and rigorous search and inspection of the slain, the Spanish captain was compelled to believe that the younger cavalier, in whom such extraordinary interest had been manifested, had by some means escaped the fate of his party, and would, ere long, reappear in safety.

"He hath met with some fair creole that hath lured him from the fray," he said to one of his lieutenants ; "for the youth liketh the glance of beauty's eye every jot as well as the flash of the foeman's steel. He doubtless hath done service enough for Mars in this broil, and now hath listed in that of Cupid. Yet he must not be left to seek romantic adventures alone in this hostile city, lest he fall by the knife of some assassin. We must despatch parties for his safety along the different streets. I would the count had come to land ; for, as matters are, it were expedient to take possession of the city at once.

He had scarcely spoken, when the roar of cannon shook the ground on which they stood, and broadside after broadside thundered over the city from the Spanish ships.

"It is the signal of debarking ; Ramarez hath decided on the very step. Now the saints intercede for these bourgeois. If Ramarez do not fire their city, and cast everything into the flames of it, the priest never christened me Martin Gusman !"

Amid the thunder of artillery, the roar of which was redoubled as it rolled along the night air, a flotilla of boats, swept by a hundred sparkling oars, left the fleet, and approached the town with a swift but stately movement. As it came nearer, there were distinctly visible on the foremost barges the forms of caparisoned steeds shining with steel and silver ; and standing beside each, with foot in stirrup, was a horseman in steel helmet and cuirass. On the stem of the headmost barge stood three cavaliers in glittering armour, one of whom, distinguished less by his height than his haughty carriage, wore a dazzling helm almost buried in a cloud of sable feathers, while near him, a gigantic

Ethiopian was holding by the bit his charger, not less sable in colour than his plumes. Beside him, with a hand lightly laid upon the mane of a snow-white Arabian, the bridle of which she held, was a beautiful female, clad in green Turkish trousers, an azure vest brodered with gold, and a light polished cap of steel upon her head, shaded by a tuft of ostrich plumes not less snowy than her steed. A golden belt that clasped her slight waist contained a pair of pistols, and by her side, in a sheath of fine gold, hung a rapier, the hilt of which was studded with blazing diamonds.

When the barge touched the shore, she and the cavalier sprung upon the backs of their chargers, and together leaped to the land. They were instantly followed by the other cavaliers and the Moor, who took his place on one side of the female. In a moment afterward, bounding from the other barges as they successively touched the land, fifty horsemen were at their backs.

"Forward!" cried the chief, pointing with his sword in the direction of the fountain, which glittered in the midst of the *Plaza* like a pile of snow.

Like a cloud of war rolling over the shaking earth, the horsemen followed their fiery leader, and instantly were on the scene of the late affray.

"What is this that hath been done, Gusman?" he demanded, reining up near the Spanish captain, who stood with his men among the slain.

"It seems, signor, that Don Louis obtained the keys of the city by some means, and that, in bearing them away, he hath been desperately set upon. I found them here by his body."

"Nay, he is not slain?" said the Spaniard, sternly.

"Life hath weak hold on him, signor. He hath been hard beset! As for the fourteen men-at-arms of your own body-guard, here lie all that remains of them."

"But the—"

"Don Henrique is not among the slain," said the captain, anticipating the question of the cavalier.

"Hath search been made for him?"

"Most strict. He hath not fallen, or he would be found among them. No one would bear off a dead body."

"But they might a wounded! Perchance they have taken him prisoner."

"Nay, my lord, I think he hath become prisoner to beauty!"

"By the rood, I believe thou hast guessed it, shrewd Gusman; for report hath it, that there is much room for romance and adventure in this fair city; and the gallant hath a temper that way, like the father who begat him! We must not let him come to harm, if in truth he do live, of which I have misgivings. Men who would make such thorough work as I see around me are not likely to let even one escape."

"I think, sire," said the young girl who rode at his side, and who was very beautiful, "he hath been taken prisoner, or worse hath happened to him. I know well Don Henrique would not have deserted brave Garcilaso when danger assailed him, though every bright eye in Christendom were the recompense of his treachery."

"Not to mention thine own, Lil! But hist, girl! your zeal hath put a bold word into your mouth," said the Count of Osma, reprovingly; "yet I think with thee that he hath had foul treatment. Ride and marshal the troops as they land, Montejo," he added, to the cavalier on his right; "and you, fiery De Leon, detach from them parties of thirty men each, to penetrate the town and occupy the guardhouses. Gusman, I leave you to turn the cannon of yonder battery, and plant them at the head of each outlet, so that, if the bourgeois, who seem to be quiet enough now, are disposed to resistance, we can sweep them from their streets. By the honour of a Spanish knight I will unfold in the glory of this moonlight the standard of Spain, and the morning sun shall see it waving from every tower."

The aidesdecamp lifted their richly-laced hats and spurred away to obey the order, while Don Garcia,

with a careless eye, began to survey the noble edifice of the hall of council, and the Cathedral, with its massive towers, flinging their black shadows half across the *Plaza*. The maiden, whose eye followed his, suddenly cried out,

"Ha, signors! that is not a cloud in the sky!"

"It is the flag of France!" cried the cavalier, discerning, as the wind turned it broadly to the moon, the ensign of France still waving on the summit of a tall flagstaff in front of the hall of council; for no citizen, however favourable he might be to the submission from motives of personal interest, was found base enough to strike it; and as Don Garcilaso had been too busy in fighting his way through the square to do it himself, it thus continued to wave far into the night proudly upon its elevation until now, when it arrested the eye of the Spanish governor. "Let yonder white cloth be dragged to the ground!" he cried; "I will take my breakfast off it in the morning. I have not forgotten the dishonour done to the Spanish flag on this very spot, and now will I wipe out the insult then offered to myself; as for this night's fresh work, I will make a settlement at my leisure with the burgher gentlemen. Tear the vile standard from its staff!" he cried, to a portly Aragonese riding near him, who combined in his person the offices of herald and trumpeter, "and in its place, with sound of trumpet and roar of artillery, let the proud ensign of Spain be lifted. We will remain here and see it done!"

The herald unfolded the Spanish flag which he bore, and, loosening his trumpet, spurred towards the flagstaff, the foot of which, standing in the black shadow of the southern tower of the Cathedral, was lost in the gloom. An instant afterward there was heard in that quarter a clashing of swords and quick hostile cries, in the midst of which the ensign was seen to descend to the earth, like a huge white bird lighting upon it. Still the sounds of conflict continued growing each moment louder and more determined.

"There is more mischief on foot," cried the Count

of Osma, riding towards the place whence the sounds proceeded.

Ere he was half way to the spot the noise of fighting ceased; when he had reached within a few yards of the flagstaff, a horseman, with a white mantle wrapped about his form and a crimson cloth cast over his steed, passed before him like the wind, and the next instant disappeared down a dark street, as if it had been a winged spirit. His first impulse was to follow in pursuit, foreboding something wrong; but, hearing the plaintive voice of his herald Boviedo, he continued on to the foot of the flagstaff, where, to his surprise, he saw this personage unhorsed and on his knees, bareheaded, and divested of his trumpet, who no sooner beheld him than he began with clasped hands to plead.

"For the blessed Virgin's sake, and for the sake of all the apostles, and for the sake of my poor wife and six little ones, slay me not, good horseman!"

"Slay thee! Thy wife and little ones! Man, thou wert never married! What mean these mouthed lies, and this condition I find thee in?" cried the governor, his surprise and anger tempered by the ludicrous emotions excited by the scene.

"It be thyself, then, noble count," cried the corpulent and sorely discomfited Boviedo, gaining his feet; "I am glad on't; I thought it had been that blanco diable who set upon me as I was riding up—"

"Silence, sirrah! Where is the French flag I saw but now descending to the ground?"

"When I came riding up, excellentissimo, there was a man or devil, I know not which, cutting at the cords with a drawn sword. I courageously charged upon him, when he turned him about and crossed blades with me. I called stoutly for help—"

"I'll be sworn thou didst."

"Nay, but we had a mortal combat for a space, and, if thou hadst been listening, thou wouldst have heard the iron blows I laid upon him with my good sword, like a sledge-hammer upon an anvil. I had nigh made

a jelly of him, excellentissimo, when down came the white flag through the air, and, flapping before my horse, so frightened him, that, what with his huge plunges, I was thrown as thou seest. When I got to my feet, I beheld mine enemy flying through the air like a ghost with great red and white wings."

"Villanous compound of garlic and hot pepper, thy wits have fooled thee, or thou art a very knave! If thou hadst as much courage as abdomen, thou wouldst have saved the honour of Spain. Lying mess of pottage that thou art, thou hast been unhorsed and beaten, and he who did it hath escaped with the flag. I would have forgiven him had he slain thee too. Where is the Spanish ensign? By the immaculate Virgin! if thou hast let him bear that away too, for methinks he had its semblance thrown across his saddle, thou hadst better never been born!"

The poor herald made no reply; but, clasping the fore legs of the count's horse, looked up deprecatingly, the great grief that swelled his breast showing itself on his round merry visage, all unused to sorrow, with a drollery of expression that disarmed the fierce wrath of the knight.

"Go to, poor braggart! If I had not heard the clashing of the swords, I would cause my horse to trample thee to death where thou grovellest! Doubtless thou hast been unfairly taken at 'vantage by one bolder than thou! By the mass, he rode boldly for it! When thou hast won with thine own hand another horse from a bourgeois, I will, perchance, receive thee again. Till then, let me not see thy face!"

Thus speaking, the count released his steed from the grasp of the disgraced herald, and galloped rapidly away, venting his wrath, so suddenly averted from the legitimate object of it, in deeply-uttered words of vengeance upon those who, from beginning to end, had so daringly resisted his authority.

"Cheer up, fat gossip!" said a strange voice, as the knight rode off; "thou hast to thank thy belly for saving thy back; for, hadst thou had less stomach, thou

wouldst have had more wit; when, Gad o' mercy! the knight would ha' beat thee unconscionably. Thank Heaven thou art a fool, brother! and then get up from thy knees."

Don Boviedo, alarmed at the suddenness, and appalled by the singular hoarseness and depth of the voice, looked around him on all sides, while these words were addressed to him, in search of the speaker; but, seeing no one, and fancying the voice to come from the air, he became terrified, and, sticking to his knees, began to pray lustily to every saint in the calendar.

"Ha, Don Spaniolo, keep at thy prayers! for thou art a sinner! art thou not?" asked Gobin, who was perched fifteen feet above him on the flagstaff, to which place he had noiselessly descended from its lofty summit when the Count of Osma rode up. "Art thou not a sinner?"

"Yea, good Diabolus."

"A very sinner?" repeated Gobin, resolutely.

"Yea am I," answered the Don, penitently.

"Art thou not a rogue, Don Spaniolo?"

"That I am, a very rogue."

"A most arrant coward?"

"Ay, good Diabolus, and a villanous coward."

"Confess thyself the biggest liar in all Spain."

"Or in all this province too."

"Nay, I will not allow thee to lie better than I. Man, I will put one more question to thee; and see thou answer it roundly. Hast thou a rib o' the woman-kind?"

"Nay, good Diabolus, I have foresworn women since I was a boy no higher than my knee."

"Hast thou six small children?"

"Not a one."

"I heard thee say so but now."

"I lied."

"Marry come up! what a thing is cowardice to clean a sinner's conscience," soliloquized the jester, looking down upon his penitent. "Hear is a greasy

rogue, because he thinketh the horned Sathanas is catechising him, makes clean work of it, and showeth himself black as the pot. If I put a few more questions to him, I shall so clear him out that it will then be a blessing to kill him, and send him to Heaven before he gets foul again. Lest I be tempted to do him this charity, I will not ask him another question that savours of purification. Come, gossip, get to thy feet, for thou hast ne'er a horse to get to! Look up; I am a sinner like thyself. I will not harm thee. If thou wantest lodging, I will give it thee!"

The Don took courage at his words; and, removing his hands from his face, looked in the direction of his voice, when, to his horror, he descried the jester, with one leg clasped around the pole, hanging with his head and hands downward. He was far from being reassured by this equivocal attitude of his new acquaintance, and was about to give way to his superstitious terror, when the *bouffon*, sliding swiftly down the staff to the ground, turned a somersault towards him, and placed his hand familiarly upon his bare head.

"Poor gossip! Gobin pities thee, and will not mock thee," he said, with singular feeling. "Gossip has lost his horse, his colours, and his master."

The poor Don groaned and hid his face, overcome with the events he had reminded him of. "Ay de mi! ay de mi!" he sighed.

"I will help thee to get a horse, gossip," said Gobin.

"Wilt thou?" he cried, clasping him in his embrace; and then, recoiling with an exclamation of horror at the singular visage and extraordinary costume of the idiot, he cried,

"Avoid thee, Sathanas!"

"I am but a poor fool," said Gobin, encouragingly, as if he had waywardly taken a kind and friendly interest in the unwieldy herald, of whose disgrace he had been a witness, if not in part the cause of it, as he evidently had borne a share in the disappearance of the two standards. The encouraging tones of his voice reassured him, and he asked eagerly,

"Wilt thou, good fool, aid me to win another horse?"

"That will I, brother Pauncho," he replied, assuming his usual extravagant manner, "and he shall have saddle, bridle, and pistols! Come along, gossip!"

"Verily, I will go with thee, good, speckled youth, for I have none else to go with! Ay de mi! Boviedo, hast thou come to this?"

Thus lamenting and mourning, the sorrowful Aragonese suffered himself to be led away in the direction of an obscure street by his new friend, who ludicrously held him round the neck, and, as he went, breathed into his ear such jests as in his cracked brain he deemed best calculated to afford him consolation in his great sorrow.

The count, in riding back, found the troops already landed, to the number of two hundred and fifty mounted Leonese lances, and seven hundred footmen. His orders were then rapidly given and put into execution; and in half an hour afterward every guardhouse was occupied by his soldiers, and the government-house and hall of council surrounded by a select guard. Not a citizen, save the horseman the governor had met, had been seen in the streets, nor was a light now visible in any dwelling; and, after the resounding footsteps of the various detachments, as they marched along the streets, had ceased, there was a repose upon the city as deep as that upon some peaceful hamlet.

The horse, and five hundred of the foot that were not detached for the guardhouses bivouacked in the square, lying on their arms in groups round the fountain. Near it was also pitched a snow-white tent, with a bell-shaped canopy, richly bordered with broad silver lace, upon the tall summit of which floated in the breeze a Spanish standard, gayly displaying its brilliant hues in the light of the moon, which, from her shield of pearl, shed over the whole warlike scene that strange, dreamy beauty in which romance and mystery so love to wander and lose themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WOUNDED CAVALIER.

THE same golden moonlight that shone upon the marble fountain, snowy pavilion, and men and steeds picturesquely grouped on the *Plaza*, entered through a casement of one of those old *casas* that give to the ancient portion of New-Orleans the massive look of a Morisco town, and fell upon the tessellated pavement of a lofty apartment decorated with Oriental magnificence. On a divan or ottoman in the deep recess of the window, and nearly hidden in the shadow cast by the ample crimson curtains, the folds of which partly concealed it like a canopy, lay a youth in a profound sleep. Save the twilight from the moonbeams that, like an atmosphere of silver dust, floated through the room, all was buried in that misty, dreamy obscurity that is so pleasing to the senses. Through a partly-opened Venetian door at the extremity of the chamber, opposite to the casement, was seen a glimpse of the moonlit court of the mansion, filled with flowers, which loaded the air with fragrance, and a white column or two, just visible through the foliage of lemon and orange trees dropping with their golden fruit; while from an invisible fountain came the sound of water, falling on stone, refreshingly to the ear.

The ottoman on which the sleeper reposed had, from its position, evidently been drawn into the recess by some watchful guardian of his slumbers, to escape the moonbeams, while the rich Damascene hangings had been carefully arranged around it so as more effectually to shade the face. But the moon had travelled on through the sky, and now fell upon his forehead like light falling upon marble. It was as alabaster, save in the blue-tinted veins that the pencil of life had

painted beneath the skin. About his temples, which throbbed with regular and even pulsation, as if sleep was working a restoration in his system, clustered rich chestnut hair, of the soft texture and of the silky, wavy character of a beautiful child's. It was luxuriantly long, after the fashion of the time, and lay in rich masses over the velvet cushion that pillowed his head. His face was pale, like his brow, but not of the deadly, wasting pallor of prolonged disease, but as if caused by sudden hurt in the midst of health and manly vigour, like one who has been stricken down with ball or steel. His features were of a noble cast, and were eminently handsome. The manly mould, however, in which they were shaped, on account of their extreme beauty, scarcely redeemed them from the softness of a lovely woman's, even aided as they were by the dark brown mustache on his upper lip, and a certain expression of decision impressed on the mouth. His complexion was of a clear olive, from which suffering had drawn the tint of health, leaving it now transparent and almost colourless save a faint flush, scarcely perceptible on the cheek, that might either proceed from returning life, or be reflected upon it from the crimson hangings. He was partly covered with a large creole manteau, which left exposed his breast and one arm, together with a hand of delicate whiteness and faultless symmetry, on the least finger of which glittered an immense diamond, like a glow-worm; while on the fore finger was conspicuous a massive ring, on the blood-red stone of which was engraved the crest of France. He was dressed in a plain blue coat, which was opened for his free breathing, and displayed within the bosom the finest Persian linen, bordered with lace from the best looms of Brussels. On a low divan near him lay a blue Andalusian cap, and a sword, with a hilt in the form of a cross, and heavy with precious stones, sheathed in a scabbard of polished steel.

Like an infant he slept, so easy was his posture, and so gentle and freely his breathing. Hitherto the pleasant sound of the falling water from the inner court had

soothed rather than disturbed him, while his sleep had been too deep to be moved by the occasional warlike notes of a distant trumpet after the landing of the Count of Osma, the clattering of iron hoofs as horsemen were sent on messages through the streets, or by the heavy tramp of the armed bands that marched by to occupy the guardhouses. It was now within an hour of midnight; the city was in full possession of the Spaniards, and these martial sounds had ceased to awaken the echoes of night; and, save the distant calls of sentinels, no noise penetrated the casement. Suddenly the stillness of the apartment was broken by a light footfall, and a female figure appeared in the door that led from it into the cloistered court, and with a gentle step, hesitating, half-retreating, approached the sleeper. She saw, as she came near, that his repose continued unbroken, and with a noiseless movement of her arm was about to draw the curtain farther over the couch to shut out the moon, when some sudden impulse arrested her hand; and, bending over him, with the folds of the drapery held above him, she gazed long upon his fair countenance with admiration and sympathy. As she gazed she sighed, and in a voice of music touchingly plaintive, murmured,

"Such should the youth be whom my soul would obey and my heart love. But, alas! I am outcast and degraded, and can look on this noble brow only with dishonour. There remains no bridegroom for the doomed Quadroone but death; no bridal robe but the winding mantle of the grave!"

She sank on one knee upon a gorgeous mat beside the divan as she spoke, and, with a hand hidden in the clouds of raven tresses that fell over her bosom, bowed her head upon her rounded arm, that unconsciously rested on his couch, and seemed to be buried in deep and painful thought. In a few moments her head drooped upon her shoulder, and, gently sinking to the pavement, she reclined against the divan in deep sleep.

How deep must have been the rest of the spirit of the youth, to be unconscious of the presence of the

gentle sleeper at his pillow ! At length the bell from the Cathedral tower tolled the first stroke of midnight, in that deep-mouthed tone which is so impressive when heard in the stillness of night, as if Time himself spoke warningly in its solemn voice. Slowly and heavily rolled the successive volumes of sound along ; now swelling high on the air, now sinking fainter and far distant to the ear, as the wind rose or fell, until the last stroke, wafted thither by the breeze, rung out clear and near, as if tolled close within the casement. It startled from his repose the deep sleeper, who had been mingling the chimes with a pleasant dream of Castile, and who, quickly raising himself on his arm, listened to the dying cadence of the sound as it grew fainter and fainter in the distance ; but, ere it ceased, taking up the key, was heard the deep, sonorous voice of a sentinel repeating his night-call, answered afar off by another, cry answering cry, till silence once more reigned without and within. The young man listened in the same attitude for some moments, and then, with a perplexed look, pressed his hand to his brow and seemed to meditate. But gradually he allowed it to fall again, and to rest upon the manteau which covered him, shaking his head as if at fault, puzzled, and wholly unable to make clear to his mind his own identity. All at once the carnelion signet on his finger caught his eye. He started with pleasure at this key to his embarrassment, and comprehended instantly the circumstances which had preceded his loss of consciousness : at the same instant, he was made aware, by a sharp pain in his side, caused by the suddenness of his motion, of his being wounded.

"I have been hurt," were the thoughts that passed through his mind ; "and some good Christian hath found me in a senseless state, and brought me hither !"

He looked about him, and surveyed with wonder the spacious apartment in which he found himself. Its rich and luxurious decorations of ivory, marble, and ebony ; its hangings of damask, and divans of blue and

crimson silk ; and the velvet couch on which he was himself reclined, the moonbeams giving just sufficient light to enable him to discern these, and appreciate the Oriental elegance of everything around him—the beauty of the inner court, with its snow-white columns, its foliage and flowers ; the fragrance of the lemon and citron trees that loaded the air ; the clear ringing of the falling fountain, and the voice of a mocking-bird that at the moment filled the court with the melodious warbling which, in that pleasant southern land, he ever hails the midnight moon, all entranced his senses, and filled his heart with joy.

“ If it were not for this ugly wound, which I now well remember how I received,” he said, “ I should believe I had fallen in the fray, and that this was Paradise to which I had awakened ! ”

His glance at the instant rested on a hand and arm like moulded pearl, laid upon the head of the ottoman. His heart leaped to his mouth, and the blood darted like lightning through his veins. He held his breath, and stilled the throbbing of his bosom as he gazed. Half in the moonlight, half in the shade, supported by her arm, with her face hidden in the abundance of her jetty hair that fell over it, reposed the most graceful form his imagination could pencil.

“ Surely this is Paradise ; and this is an Hour ! ” he exclaimed, as much in the tone of seriousness as in the accents of gallantry.

The beauteous vision had brought the bright colour to his cheek and the warmth of life to his brow ; and, bending over her, he saw, by the rising and falling of her vesture, as well as by the relaxed and natural position of the limbs, that she slept. How beautiful was the attitude of the sleeper ! The polished and shapely arm and dimpled hand, so faultless and finished in their symmetry, with a raven tress or two thrown upon it, contrasting its whiteness ! What can compare with the glossy softness of those tresses, or the blackness of their hue ! They concealed all her face and bosom like a veil, having escaped in their wan-

tonness from a band of wrought silk that had been gracefully bound above her forehead. Her vesture was of the finest lawn, with large and loose sleeves, open at the neck and breast, embroidered with gold, and ornamented with little diamond buttons. She wore drawers of the finest linen, deeply bordered with lace, and around her waist, which was bewitchingly small and elegantly turned, was tied a broad sash of silk and gold folded together, the ends of which, entwined with precious stones, hung long from behind in an exceedingly graceful manner to the knees. The hand that was free lay negligently in her lap, and the arm, like that beneath her head, was bare nearly to the shoulder ; but, unlike that, it was clasped with a broad and solid gold bracelet set with rubies, while on the fingers of the hand were several small gold rings of delicate workmanship. Sleep, in her innocence, had permitted one foot and ankle to escape from her robe, and unconsciously display so much of the beautiful limb as betrayed the matchless perfection of her charming figure. Her slipper of golden tissue, curiously embroidered, had fallen off too, and a naked little foot, all warmth and beauty, and like a child's in its minute and soft proportions, caught the moonlight and finished the picture.

He gazed enchanted ! He feared to move, to breathe, lest it should be a beautiful spirit that had watched his sleep, and he should frighten it away. But the whole form was breathing with life, and he knew it must be mortal. He laid his finger, as if to test its humanity, on the hand by his pillow, as gently as if it had been a timid dove he feared to startle from its rest, and the touch thrilled to his heart.

"She is mortal, and no creature of air !" he exclaimed. "Whither has my adventurous fortune wafted me ? What beauteous being hath love commissioned to attend upon me ? Before I have beheld her features, I am in love with that foot of pliant ivory, and charmed with the beauty that floats around her like a transparent cloud. If she wake not, I will lift

that virgin veil of raven tresses that enviously hides a face which should be a match to, and, as it were, gloriously crown a form of such perfection."

He rose from the ottoman with the indolent motion occasioned by the lingering influences of a sleeping potion that had been administered to him, and with the unsteady but graceful step of one whose natural ease of manner is superior to physical suffering, noiselessly passed round her, as she slept with her face to the moon, and knelt beside her, his person hid within the shade of the hangings. For a moment he paused to contemplate her, and admired the glossy waves of hair profusely covering her arm and descending to the pavement, with here and there, like shells of pearl gleaming through the midnight waves of Indus, glimpses of her face and forehead.

"It were sacrilege," he said, "to lift this modest veil which sleep hath cast over her beauty. Yet it were discourtesy to Nature, who hath formed a thing so beauteous, to leave it shut up in a casket. I will dare the crime, if crime it be to gaze on beauty."

With a bold hand, but with a touch that would not have waked an infant, he removed the raven tresses from before her face, and held the shining mass so as to shade the eyelids from the moon, for he would not have waked her at that moment for an empire. Her left cheek lay upon the arm in such a position as to show only one side of the face in outline; but it was the most perfect profile he had ever seen. From the forehead to the chin, the line of beauty was drawn with such grace and truth, that the intimate union of soul with feature was presented with a fidelity that mocked the imitative power of the pencil. He gazed on the fair low forehead, just enough retreating to give feminine dignity a place, and intellect its throne; on the jetty and finely-curved eyebrows, laid in minute lines, like the delicate vanes of a feather, themselves appearing like two sable feathers, twins in beauty and size; on the veined lids of the closed eyes, fringed with an interlacing of lashes, both love's palisades and

battery, that swept the cheek ; on the soft hue of that cheek, just shaded by the warmth of the glowing southern sun, that loves the olive rather than the lily ; on the ripe lip, like a parted rosebud in which love lay covert ; upon the sweet, yet sad expression of the mouth, left by her last melancholy thoughts, and which sleep had sealed there ere it fled ; on the chaste, expressive beauty of the whole reposing countenance !—he gazed, and wondered that aught of earthly workmanship could be so perfect, that moulded earth which the breath of life hath warmed could prove so beautiful. To all these charms, which, as he gazed upon them, served to turn admiration into a softer emotion, was added extreme youth, scarce seventeen springs having served to unfold so fair a flower.

“By'r lady!” he said to himself, “this divine creature would grace a throne, and these brows would add lustre to a regal diadem! Were I emperor of Ind, methinks I would become a peasant most willingly for love of her. How calmly she slumbers! 'Tis thus only innocence and childhood rest. Innocence is written on each lineament ; is part and parcel in the compound of her beauty ; wanting which, it would lose its better principle. 'Tis to it what lustre is to the sun, fragrance to the rose, vision to the eye—'tis the heaven of her loveliness. I will maintain, and pledge my soul's bliss on it, that her cheek hath ne'er been touched by guilty lip! Nor will I profane its virgin purity, though the temptation had wellnigh but now overcome my better feelings. Nay, I will leave the cheek as pure as the envious moonbeam that, unconscious of the loveliness it shines upon, lies coldly on it. Yet she hath watched my pillow, till, weary with her vigil, sleep has overtaken her. Methinks it will be no desecration to touch her cheek in gratitude. Nay, I will do it like a brother who salutes a sister who hath done him kindness. Ah, Don Henrique,” he added, smiling, “thy arguments have little virtue at the bottom! Cupid is a lying logician, and hath filled thy heart with reasons which are against the sober

judgment of thy head, and which will ill bear the test thy honour would try them by! 'Tis plain thou art in love, or on the verge on't, for none but love would teach thee sophistry so palpable, disguise foul wrong under semblance of right, and into heaven-born gratitude convert the impulses of earthly passion! Yet mine is not passion; 'tis love for the beautiful! If I should touch her lip, it would be sinless of thoughts or intent of wrong, as the worshipper devoutly doth kiss the shrine of his devotion. Nay, I will just press my lip to her hand; but if I were gently to kiss her cheek it were not more bold. I will do it so lightly that she will not wake; nay, will dream a fairy hath lit upon it!"

Thus reasoned Don Henrique with temptation, and thus do men argue with themselves when they would yield to what they have a will to do; outreasoning conscience till she hath not an argument left in her defence, and then, because she is silent, delude themselves with the belief that she approves. As the young Castilian made up his mind to yield to the temptation, he bent over the face of the fair sleeper with his bold lip. Suddenly a hand was laid lightly upon his shoulder. He started between guilty surprise and alarm, and, looking quickly up, saw suspended above his head a glittering stiletto ready to descend into his bosom, while bending over him was a young man wearing the rich habit of a chief of the *courreurs de bois*. He was rather under the middle height, slightly but elegantly formed, with the symmetry of limb of a young Apollo. His complexion was dark as an Italian's, and his hair was black, and hung in glossy masses about his bared and shapely neck. His features were lofty, and of an enthusiastic cast, and cut with the accuracy of finished sculpture, offering to the chisel of Praxiteles the model for a youthful warrior. They wore an ingenuous expression, while the soft lashes that shaded his eyes, notwithstanding the fire in them and the quick blood in his brown cheek, betrayed a diffident

and retiring nature, and showed that to the bravery of a man he united the bashfulness of a maiden.

His dress consisted of a short spencer of green cloth, embroidered with myrtle leaves, the edges turned out with gold ; buff boots of deer's hide, with ample tops, that came up to the calf of the leg, and then, falling over, descended to the ankles again, with a silver fringe bordering it, and most becomingly setting off the feet. An under-dress of the softest doeskin closely fitting the limb ; an inner vest of blue silk laced with silver ; buckskin hunting-gloves, that covered the whole wrist ; a sable hat, with the broad flap looped boldly up in front, secured with a brilliant, and a dark green plume, that drooped low to his brows, with a sprig of green myrtle stuck in the button, completed the costume. He wore a short curved sword, in shape and size between a Turkish sabre and a rapier, with a plain iron hilt, suspended by steel chainlets from a belt of black leather, in which also were stuck a pair of pistols, the handles ornamented with lions' heads carved in silver, as was also the sheath of the stiletto that he held in his hand ; while a small serpentine bugle of elegant workmanship, chased with devices, representing stags and hounds in full career, hung beneath his arm.

His attitude was rather warning than threatening as he bent over the young man, and reproof tempered the flashing fire of his eyes as he fixed them upon the handsome invalid's face, from which the blood, with which the sight of beauty had mantled it, had once more retreated, leaving it pale as when he slept ; but the collected and steady gaze of his eyes, and the decision of his compressed lip, showed it was the paleness of sudden surprise rather than that of fear. For an instant the young man gazed down upon him as he knelt beneath his extended arm, and then, with a voice less in anger than in reproof, said,

"Is this honourable recompense, noble Spaniard, to sully the purity of a maiden's cheek who hath watched thy pillow till sleep hath overpowered her ? with

wanton lip to insult the sister beneath the brother's roof? Is it thus Castilian cavaliers repay deeds of hospitality?"

"Signor! by mine honour as a Spanish gentleman," said the youth, blushing with ingenuous shame at the deserved rebuke, and, struck with his manly language and noble self-restraint, experiencing, too, an instant admiration for him, notwithstanding his hostile attitude, "I had never meant wrong to this maiden. Waking from deep sleep, I found her slumbering by my couch, and scarce believed she was not an angel. I rose, knelt down by her side, and gazed enraptured on her marvellous beauty. As I gazed, I thought that with weary keeping of midnight vigil over my slumbers she had sunk to sleep; and, while I thought this, gratitude for her gentle service rose in my breast, and, rashly tempted by her loveliness, I mingled gratitude with worship; and with something of a brother's tenderness, but without a thought that would not have borne the Holy Virgin's scrutiny, I would have kissed her as she slumbered. By my truth, fair sir, I have given thee the measure of my offence!"

The candour and openness of his defence, though it did not altogether demonstrate the entire propriety of the fraternal mode by which he had chosen to express his grateful sense of a maiden's kindness, at once changed the attitude of the two young men towards each other, and the interest the Spaniard had felt towards the youth was instantly reciprocated by his own bosom in return. Replacing in its scabbard the shining steel which a moment later would have penetrated the heart of his seemingly false guest, he extended his hand towards him with a frank smile, saying,

"I would fain believe I did thee wrong, signor, in suspecting thee of ill-requiting my hospitality. She is a Quadroone, signor, and I thought thou hadst presumed on this to offer her thy licentious love. But Azélie shall die by a brother's hand ere she share the fate to which her degraded race is doomed! I am her brother; she is dearer to me than liberty or life; and he who

dares insult her with lawless passion hath not an hour's lease of life if Renault the Quadroon cross his path!"

The young Spanish cavalier rose from his knee as the quadroon extended his hand, and accepted it with a friendly grasp, and then listened to his impassioned words with wonder and the most lively interest. When he had ceased, he asked earnestly,

"What meanest thou by a Quadroone, brave Renault? I am but recently from Spain, and though I have heard often of the far-famed beauty of the creoles of Louisiana, and something said of a lovely race of women termed *quatr'-unes*, I knew not that they were not one and the same."

"I will first wake my sister, lest the cold marble chill her tender limbs. She slumbers profoundly. Poor child! she hath suffered much anxiety since the arrival of your ships, signor, lest I should be brought hither slain or wounded even as thou wast! I have need to hold my life dearer than I do for her sake; for if I fall, she hath only her own honour and pride of spirit to defend her against injustice, with her trust also in Heaven!"

He spoke with a deep feeling, which awakened the other's warmest sympathy. There was a brief silence on the part of both, and then the cavalier, taking his arm, said,

"Let her sleep, Renault! It were rude to break such sweet repose; nor can her head lie softer than on the ivory arm that now pillows it! Thou mayst well be proud to call so fair a creature *sister*! Is she not most lovely?"

"Signor," said the quadroon, sadly following the admiring eyes of the youthful Spaniard, and resting them for a moment with affectionate gaze upon the reclining form, while his fraternal pride acknowledged its wondrous beauty; "Signor, thou hast well said—she is most lovely! It is this brilliant and most dangerous beauty that will poison the cup of her young life! It is this that arms a devoted brother with jealous watchfulness, lest the prowling wolf come about his fold and devour his only lamb! Yes, she is lovely and gentle,

and good as she is fair ; Heaven avert evil from her head, and turn aside the dark curse that hangs about her race, that it may not descend upon her ! Oh, thou who art merciful and just," he cried, impassionately kneeling on one knee, spreading his hands over her, and lifting his tearful eyes towards Heaven ; " thou in whose eyes all are equal save in guilt ; who sees not as man seeth, and judgest from the motives of the heart rather than from the actions of the hand, forgive me if, to save the honour of one whom thou hast given me to protect, I should one day set at liberty her pure spirit !"

While he was speaking the maiden lifted her head from her arm, put back the shining veil of hair from her temples, and gazed up into his eloquent face, her large, glorious eyes filled with wonder.

" Brother," she murmured as he ceased, and threw around his neck her graceful arms, and for a moment hung there like a tendril clinging to the stately trunk it hath grown up with ; " Brother," she said again, " methinks thou wert praying for me ! There is no danger threatens me that passeth thee by !"

" Nay, sweet sister ! thou hast fallen asleep un-awares," he said, avoiding a direct reply : " the cold stone will penetrate this mat of Angola floss ! Thou hast not been a wakeful watcher to sleep on thy post. I had affairs abroad in the city that kept me late, or I would have relieved thee earlier. But see ! thy patient hath little need of watching ; nay," he added, smiling and lifting her from her reclining position, " I came and found him watching thee !"

The lovely Quadroone turned her eyes for the first time from the face of her brother, and saw, standing within the radiant moonlight, him whom she had left sleeping now gazing upon her with mingled devotion and admiration ; for, if he had been charmed by her beauty as she slept, he was now bewildered by the light of her eyes and the sweet melody of her voice. She blushed, and, turning with instinctive delicacy, drew back within the shade of the curtain.

"Thou seest he needs not thy farther care, Azélie. Thy sleeping draught was drugged with health. Go, now, and seek thine own pillow, which, but for the stirring matters that kept me abroad, thy cheek should have pressed four hours ago. In the morning the signor will thank thee for thy nursing ; good-night."

He kissed her as he said this, with that delightful tenderness that so becometh a guardian brother towards a sister.

"*Buenos noches ! señor !*" she said, as he released her, in those mellow tones that the cavalier thought so ravishing, and the like of which he thought he had never heard save from the throat of the nightingale.

Then, bending her head with the modest salute of parting courtesy becoming a maiden towards a handsome young stranger, she retired slowly from the apartment, with an easy, undulating, and almost stately motion ; for, with all her loveliness and feminine grace, there was a certain native stateliness in her air, and carriage as she walked that was only wanting to complete her charms, and most agreeably harmonized with her height, which was of that just stature that cannot be described by words, and of which no sort of idea can be conveyed in feet and inches.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CASTILIAN AND YOUNG COUREUR CHIEF.

AZÉLIE had some moments disappeared through the door that led into the corridor, and her faintest footfall had for several seconds ceased to break the stillness of the distant cloister along which she retreated, ere the youthful Castilian turned away his gaze from the doorway where he had last seen her form relieved against the moonlight that filled the court. He then

started only at the sound of the quadroon's voice, who said, somewhat quickly,

"Thou wouldst know, signor, something of the Quadroone."

"Renault, forgive me, for my youth and for her peerless beauty! I will not offend again," said the young man, observing his sensibility, and with difficulty appreciating his quick emotions; but he had to learn, what Renault too painfully knew, that his admiration could be none other than guilty, and to herself infamy; that in the cradle the mark of degradation is placed upon the brow of the Quadroone, and that, in the richness of her womanhood, no man can look upon her with honourable love.

"Sit on the divan, signor, for the pain of thy wound hath drawn the blood from thy cheek. I will stand here beside thee."

The young cavalier had, indeed, grown suddenly pale on the departure of the fair creature, whose presence had raised him, almost supernaturally, above his physical weakness. The wound he had received had been inflicted rather with the blow of the dagger's hilt than the steel itself, which, glancing from its direction, but slightly entered his side, against which the handle struck with the full force of the creole's arm. The effect of this, nevertheless, was nearly as severe as if the blade had entered deeper into his body, and, as has been seen, had instantly deprived him of consciousness. He had awaked, after five hours' sleep, almost entirely free from pain, and the sight of his lovely watcher had caused him to forget his wound altogether; but her absence restored him to the consciousness of suffering; and he found, on placing his hand instinctively upon his side, that the exertion he had made in rising from the ottoman, with the subsequent excitement, had opened his wound afresh. He gladly availed himself, therefore, again of the downy pillows of the ottoman. Reclining at length thereon, and supporting his face in his hand, he looked up into the ingenuous countenance of the quadroon as he leaned against the casement, and said,

"Proceed, noble Renault! I am deeply interested in thee—and, pardon me, thy gentle sister also; and I fain would learn the mystery that seems to hang over you both. Pray thee, go on!"

"I have no tale to fit the ear of pleasure or amuse the idle, signor. Stern truths are told in few words. I am a quadroon, the son of a bondwoman, and the child of guilt. My father is the late Marquis de la Caronde, once governor of this province; my mother a Moorish slave, whom he freed at my birth. This is a noble parentage, and a proud, signor!" he said, his fine lip curling with an expression of mingled scorn and shame.

"Caronde! Methinks I heard that name given to the fierce youth who attacked our party."

"You did, signor. We are brothers, save that he was born under sanction of Holy Church."

"Humph!" said the other, with a comprehensive glance; "proceed, good Renault! Thou hast not spoken of thy sister yet."

"This impatience, signor, promises evil to her who is the object of it," said the quadroon, sternly; "but I need not warn thee of the danger which menaces him who dares give his thoughts to my sister. Think no more of her, and you will find me a friend. Breathe her name again, and we are foes; for she can never be thy leman, and thy wife she may not be!"

"I will not be angry, Renault; for doubtless thou hast excuse, in thy condition, for this hasty jealousy."

"Listen, and thou shalt learn. The quadroon is of the fifth generation in descent, from the European on one side and the Ethiopian slave on the other, supposing no African intermixture of blood after that of the original progenitor. Each generation growing fairer, in the fifth the African blood is nearly lost, and quite so in some instances. Nevertheless, the existing law of this province against the intermarriage of Europeans with slaves extends to the descendants of slaves, and are so wide as to embrace within its statute the most remote descent from Ethiopian lineage, forbid-

ding, on the severest penalties, such unlawful connexions, and declaring them unlawful. This refusal to legalize marriages with the quadroones, who are especially aimed at by this law, has loosed the hymeneal ties, and the mistress everywhere usurps the place of the wife. It has at length become a system. Quadroone mothers, who have obtained their freedom at the hand of their paramours, as naturally educate their daughters to become like themselves, as do wedded mothers theirs to become wives. The wealth that has been lavished upon themselves they draw from its hoarded coffers, to expend upon their daughters, in developing the charms of their persons, and adorning them with those light and luxurious accomplishments which will best fit them for the condition for which they are destined. For this purpose some are sent even to Europe to receive the more elegant part of their tuition; returning, in after years, rich with those charms and graces of person that fascinate and bewilder, but with minds wholly destitute of moral culture; and, if religious, superstitious; in person fitted to adorn thrones; in soul too lamentably adapted to the degrading state for which they are so carefully educated."

"Truly, that lovely angel who watched by my pillow—"

"Heaven has given her a brother!" said the quadroon, in a voice that spoke volumes to the heart of the young Spaniard.

"Renault!" he repeated, and grasped his hand impressively, as if to show his sympathy with him. Renault acknowledged it with a grateful look, and then continued:

"The number of quadroones in this city and province is large for the population: they are beautiful, attractive, and fascinating—"

"That I will asseverate, on my honour," said the Spaniard, with youthful enthusiasm, as he recalled the beauty of Azélie.

"They are also rich, with few exceptions," continued Renault, without noticing his words, save by a

frown. "Degraded virgins—unwedded wives—dishonoured mothers! But there have been exceptions to this universal licentiousness. Quadroone maidens, in whose breasts dwelt native purity of principle—for, degraded as our race is, we are of mankind, signor, and virtue may dwell with us—have risen above their state of degradation, and, with virtuous indignation, spurned the criminal proffers of licentious paramours. But these exceptions are few, and sudden and violent death has often been the reward of their virtue. What had they to do with virtue? The honour of a quadroone! Ha! ha! would it not be a rare jest for gallants to make merry with over their midnight cups!"

Renault clinched his hand, and laughed with ironical bitterness as he said this; then, leaving the case—ment, he made two or three rapid strides before it ere he resumed his attitude.

"You speak not of the male quadroons—of the brothers—of *yourself*, Renault," said the Spaniard, after waiting until he had recovered his composure.

"The brothers are accounted useless; we can administer to no mother's vanity—to no ruler's passion. *We* remain slaves, while *our sisters* become free; and if we are free in our mothers' rights, or are made so from a father's pride, who will not let his own blood remain in bondage, we are suffered to grow up like noxious plants by the road side, without culture and without care. Signor, often does the brother present, on his bended knee, the winecup of his lord, while he is luxuriously reclining his head in the lap of his beautiful sister."

"Heavens! is this thing so, Renault?" cried the youth, half rising from the divan, and looking earnestly in his face.

"Had I the slavish spirit of bondage that becomes my birth, I should, ere this, have done what I have now named."

"Explain, Renault!"

"Hear me, Spaniard! I have told thee that I am the illegitimate son of the venerated Marquis of Ca-

ronde. I loved him, and revere his memory. He gave my mother her freedom, and with it followed mine; for, by our laws, the fate of the offspring follows that of the mother. From childhood I was his idol. He cherished me, educated me, spoiled me with indulgence. The wealth and luxury around me I owe to his munificence. He is now dead. Scarce had the marble covered him ere his legitimate son, who had ever hated me for our father's partiality, exhibited the books of franchise, and challenged the judges to point to the records of my mother's manumission.

"It was there?" asked the youth, eagerly.

"The marquis had forgotten to record it."

"And you became—"

"On the instant, with ill-concealed exultation, he proclaimed my mother, with her offspring, *slaves!*"

"His own blood! It could not be."

"You shall hear. He produced proof that his father had paid one thousand dollars in Spanish gold to a Cuban slaver for her, and that she became his property; but that he manumitted her afterward he defied proof."

"Well," interjected the deeply-interested Spaniard, on observing him to pause, as if he could proceed no farther.

"Well, signor, she was adjudged to be his slave."

"Wherefore should he wish this?"

"He cared not for the mother for her value—there was a deeper aim."

"What motive so base that could lead him to desire her return to bondage?"

"Hatred towards myself was the least."

"But he surely hated not thy sister?"

"No, Spaniard, no, no! he did not *hate* her."

"Ha! what? you do not mean to say that he—"

"Loved her."

"I did mean to speak these words, but could not."

"I have spoken them. He loved her, Spaniard. Intensely as he hated the brother, loved he the sister."

"Not with a guilty love?"

"How else?"

"And his *sister*, too?"

"The Marquis de la Caronde is not the father of Azélie. This I have discovered by accident. Jules, by some means, knew it also. To all save ourselves it is a secret; the marquis ever acknowledged her as his child. There is a mystery about her birth and her father, known only to the marquis (if indeed to him) and my mother."

"'Tis strange he should have lived with her, believing her to be false."

"He was a weak man, and she had over him a wonderful influence. My earliest recollection of Azélie is when she was in her third year. Up to that time my mother says she was with a foster-mother. I alone am related to the young noble."

"He loved her, then? and *she*—"

"Returned it not; nay, met his guilty love with scorn, as a maiden should do. He gave me, rather than her virtue, credit for it; and his hatred grew, till, to avenge himself on both at one blow, he devised the plan of reclaiming us to servitude, that, as the master, he might obtain what was denied to the paramour."

"Base ingrate! foul and fiendish!" cried the Spaniard, with indignation flashing his pale cheek. "When was this judgment given?"

"But yesterday morning. The arrival within the hour of your fleet only prevented him from dragging my sister to his couch of lust."

"And would you have seen him do it?" asked the youth, the fire flashing from his dark eyes.

"*Seen him do it!*" he repeated, clinching his dagger's hilt like a vice, articulating each word slowly and with terrible emphasis through his shut teeth, which glared with rage, while his eyes blazed in their sockets; "*Seen him do it!*"

He smiled, too, as he spoke, and such a *smile* has seldom gleamed on the human countenance! The young man was awed, and singularly impressed by the terrific effect of his looks and manner; he remained

gazing upon him with feelings of the deepest wonder and admiration, showing, by the expression of his features, that he fully appreciated his nobleness of soul and the lofty sternness of his character. At length, after taking a few rapid turns through the apartment, Renault said, with composure,

"Now, signor, thou knowest if I have cause to guard my sister as if she were the jewel of my own honour! Thou knowest now what it is to be a quadroone! that it is another name for degradation, both moral and physical. We must have no feelings, no honour, no purity! Slaves, mere slaves, are only so in the bondage of the body; the quadroone is a slave both in body and soul! What a fate is before the delicate and sensitive maidens of our race! Their young love, if it rise, and it must and will rise, for noble youths, must be crushed in the bud in the heart, or be cherished only to ripen into sensuality. Our young men may not look, but at the peril of their lives, upon the blue-eyed maidens of their hearts' choice; and our love, too, must wither and decay within the bosom, while we see the object that awakened it lost to us for ever in the love of another."

He spoke these words with a sadness and tenderness, that conveyed to the young Spaniard the impression that he himself was the victim of such a hopeless passion as he had described.

"Renault, upon my honour, you have my warmest sympathy," said the youth, in a tone that won confidence, and bore witness to the truth of the words he uttered. "If in my power, the evil you dread shall not come upon you; nor, so help me Heaven! upon your sister. Spain now holds the province, and her laws shall govern. This young Marquis of Caronde hath no claim on thee or thine from this hour."

"Nay, signor! to change our laws could not be done with safety. The whole city would rise as one man. The judgment has gone forth. I am his slave—I am my brother's bondman. Were I not so, I should not feel the spirit within me that I do. It is because

I am his slave that I am free ! free as Nature made me ! As his slave, I have flung defiance into his teeth ; and as his brother, did yesterday mock and laugh at his power in the gate of the Place d'Armes, when, aided by his minions, he would have seized and made me captive."

"Ha ! did he dare this !"

"He knew that he must do this ere he could possess my sister, signor ! The coward feared a brother's protecting arm ! He knew me well."

"What did you ?"

"I struck down the base villains, and, leaping upon a horse near by, reached my house in time to bar my doors against a party that were crossing my threshold ! They then stormed the house."

"Did *she* know of this claim ?"

"Not the truth. She knew not he claimed her as his *slave*. I have kept it from her."

"Bless you for it, Renault. And did you alone withstand them ?"

"Ay, for full ten minutes ; when their leader, my nobly-born brother, joined them, and bade them, in a savage voice, bring brands and set fire to the lintel. On hearing this, I bore my sister to the battlements, in sight of all, suspended my dagger above her bosom, and swore by Heaven, if a single spark were borne against the house, even by the winds, I would strike it to her heart. This would not have suited my brother's purpose, and he bade them hold, and, instead, batter down the *grand porte* leading from the street to the inner court. I placed myself before it, and gave Az lie the dagger. She kissed it, and stood beside me. Suddenly, amid the thunder of their assault, we heard the Cathedral bells tolling out warlike alarm, and the cry of 'The Spaniard !' flew wildly along the street."

"And this, noble Renault, created a diversion in thy favour ?"

"It did ; for the bars were giving way at every stroke, and in five minutes more my sister would have

fallen by her own hand, a sacrifice to her honour. As their retiring footsteps ceased, the heroic girl cast herself upon my bosom and wept. It was a grateful moment to me, signor, and in my heart I thanked Heaven that the Spaniard had been sent to rule our province."

"It was this feeling of gratitude, then, that led thee to shelter me?"

"Nay; I was swiftly returning home, after the dispersion of the populace, to see if my dwelling was secure from the assaults of lawless ruffians, when a tall person, wrapped from the feet to the eyes in a long gray cloak, bade me, in a voice of irresistible command, 'Fly to the succour of the Spanish cavaliers if I were a Christian man!' Ere I could speak, the figure had disappeared in the shadows of the wall of the Ursuline convent. I instantly drew my sword and hastened to the Place d'Armes, whither the clash of arms directed me. I saw you hard pressed, and, by the plume and bearing, recognised Jules and his free band. My bosom burned to meet him in fair battle, and I bounded forward. Before I could reach the scene of contest, I saw you struck down, and left for dead beside the fountain. As I was passing the spot, with my eye fixed on my brother, I saw your companion, the noble Spaniard, in great jeopardy from the dagger of Jules. I bounded forward to save him, with an uplifted battle-axe which I caught up from the ground. My brother and I met; and, at a blow, I severed his right hand at the wrist, to save the life of a poor idiot, who, before I could reach the spot, had himself arrested Jules's arm, at his own imminent peril. This event put a period to the contest; and, hastily retreating to the fountain, I raised you from the cold marble, bore you in my arms to this place, dressed your wounds, administered to you a healing draught, and left you to the careful watching of my gentle sister."

"I cannot thank thee in words that will express my feelings, dear Renault," said the youth, rising and em-

bracing him with grateful enthusiasm. "Who can be this mysterious individual who has manifested such interest in me and Don Garcilaso? Perhaps some partisan of the Spanish party in the town!"

"It was a woman by the voice, and I know no female of her stature in the province. I cannot account for the extraordinary power of her words over me, that I should obey them so readily. If I were superstitious, signor," he added, solemnly, "I should think the appearance was not of earth."

"It was mysterious, certainly. It hath done me a kindness, whether it be of flesh or spirit. If supernatural, it is at least a spirit of good."

"It may be so," said Renault, musingly.

The young men for a few moments seemed to be wrapped in their own reflections in reference to the subject of their conversation, when the quadroon, drawing his belt tighter, and bringing round the handle of his sword so as to be readily grasped, said quickly,

"Sir Spaniard, I must now crave your indulgence. The night wears apace, and your pillow invites repose. I have duties that call me forth until the day break."

"Nay, Renault, let me not detain thee. My wound is something more painful than it hath been, for your discourse hath driven the indignant blood through my veins till it hath got the fever heat. I will remain quiet. But first I would ask thee if the brave Signor Garcilaso be living, and if the city hath quietly submitted to the Spanish arms?"

"The Spaniards, led by their commander, landed in force shortly after you fell, signor, and have occupied all the gates and posts with their detachments, while the main body is encamped in the Place d'Armes!"

"And have you heard nothing from them that show anxiety at my absence?"

"Nothing, signor."

"'Tis strange! Hath Ramirez hoped that I have been slain?" he said, half audibly. "So, Renault, it is well! Let it not be known that I live or that I am

here, till I shall name a time fitting for the disclosure. This jealous Condé," he added, to himself, "shall have an eye over his actions that he little suspects. I know his temper well; and he is scarce likely to change slavish laws and systems of licentiousness like these I have heard unfolded! No! no! not Ramarez! they chime too well with his free manners! Brave Renault, I honour and esteem you. Let us hereafter be friends. Count on my protection if thou shouldst ever need it, and, I pray thee, count on my honour in reference to one who is most dear to thee."

"How mean you, signor?"

"Thy sister."

"Speak not of her, signor; thou knowest thou mayst not."

"Nay, Renault, I would share with thee in thy brotherly task of protecting her."

"It were setting the hawk to guard the dovecote!" said the quadroon, with a slight smile.

"We will speak of this more anon, Renault. The knight of the red plume will have cause to cross blades with me if I e'er get the better of this wound. Now I think of it, there were many of the assailants bore the scarlet badge that distinguished him."

"He is a leader of a party of some fifty young creoles," said Renault, turning back at his remarks; "most of them are of good families, who voluntarily took up arms three years ago in defence of the city, when Spain made her first demand of surrender."

"And when Ramarez got the worst of it. He is yet sore upon it."

"Most of these being wild and free in their habits," continued the quadroon, "they soon became lawless, and grew overbearing among the townsmen, going through the streets in bands with swords drawn, brow-beating and threatening, and even attacking all who murmured or opposed them; till, at length, goaded beyond endurance, the citizens rose in arms against them and drove them from the town, when they retreated to a small tower, situated on the shore of a lagoon about

a league distant, where they fortified themselves, and, under the name of *chasseurs*, bade the citizens defiance. Occasionally they were permitted to enter the city in small parties, being first deprived of their arms at the gates, to visit their families or friends, on condition of departing before night. On the rumour of the approach of the Spaniards they appeared, sixty in number, on horseback, before the Pontchartrain gate, and offered to aid in defending the town under the direction of the councillors. After much hesitation, they were admitted without arms; but, instead of presenting themselves to the disposal of the rulers at the government-house, they dispersed by twos and threes throughout different streets, and met at a preconcerted rendezvous, from whence they appeared in the Place d'Armes, armed with those long, sharp, two-edged swords, which made their attack so formidable. Their assault upon your party was wholly unexpected by the town's-people, who, as you must have seen, fled in consternation from the consequences. After the attack, they mounted their horses, which were held in waiting by some of their band, and galloped out to their stronghold."

"They fought for the keys, then, methinks, if such is their character, rather that they might obtain access to the treasury and armory, than from shame at their being in our possession!" observed Don Henrique.

"This might have been partly the cause. Their patriotism, when it first showed itself three years ago, was pure, but it is now corrupted by licentiousness. They wish to make a republic of the province. There were seven among them, called, from their friendship to each other, the Seven Brothers, who once distinguished themselves by their virtue and patriotism, one only of whom has escaped the contagion. It is to him the city has looked for a champion."

"Was he present in the council-chamber yesterday?"

"He was more surely employed in the service of the country. When a man cannot breast the tumult of the waves, he must patiently wait until they subside."

"You speak ambiguously, Renault."

"I can speak no plainer to the ear of a Spaniard, signor."

"Methinks there is something like conspiracy hidden beneath your words, Renault. Ha! that dress you wear is the studied costume of a band, and that myrtle sprig is like a badge and token of brotherhood. 'Tis worked in silk also on your breast. That bugle, too, at thy belt! Thy absence this night, Renault, on my life, hath something to do with recovering the city."

The quadroon smiled as if the other had divined the truth, and then, waving his hand, was about to leave him, when his eye rested on the signet the Spaniard still wore on his finger. He half extended his hand, and seemed as if he was about to demand it; then, suddenly drawing it back, said, beneath his voice, "'Twill do as well another time and by another hand. Signor Cavalier," he added, aloud, "I leave thee a pleasant repose and healthful waking."

"Stay, good Renault. Bid one of thy slaves leave this message with the captain of Count Osma's guard, lest he be disposed to make my absence an excuse for doing mischief to the town's people."

As he spoke, he pencilled the following note and gave it to the quadroon:

"Give thyself no trouble about my absence."

"HENRIQUE."

"Now," he continued, "as you have been so kind to me, I will, in gratitude, give you the countersign decided on, for the first night's possession of the province, by Osma himself. You may wish to go beyond the barriers, which you tell me our troops now occupy, and it will, perhaps, be of service to you." Thus saying, he placed a folded paper in his hand, and bade him good-night.

Renault accepted it with thanks, pressed his hat low over his brows, and strode, with the firm and manly step of a freeman rather than a slave, from the apartment. He had been absent about a quarter of an hour, when the ear of Don Henrique, who was once more reclining upon the divan and thinking of Azélie, was in-

vaded by a sweet strain of music. He started with surprise and rapture. It came from a great distance, and approached nearer and nearer till it filled the court, when it died away until almost lost in silence; then swelling, clear, strong, and near, it would rise, wave on wave, and flow onward, a flood of ravishing melody filling the whole apartment, and melting his very soul with ecstasy. It would then sink gradually away, retiring farther and farther from the ear, till distance and silence gave back no sound save the dashing of the falling fountain in its marble basin. He continued still to listen like one bewildered, and again rose the same sweet, wild strain, floating and undulating, ascending and descending, as if the sport of a fitful zephyr, that now wafted its volume of sound triumphantly along with invisible power, now soared with them on indolent wings into upper air, or now bore them swiftly into infinite distance. Insensibly, while he listened, his senses yielded to the spell of the unseen minstrel, and he fell into a deep and quiet slumber.

CHAPTER VII.

SCENE IN A PAVILION.

THE midnight chimes, slowly and heavily tolling from the Cathedral Tower, which had so suddenly broken the slumbers of the young Spanish cavalier, had also penetrated the interior of the pavilion in the *Place d'Armes*, and struck upon the ears of an individual who occupied it. He was writing over a little ebony *escritoire*, on which were scattered letters just finished but not yet folded; despatches, unsealed, directed to the minister of state, and an open packet or two, with the royal arms of Spain impressed upon the broken wax. Near them lay a bunch of massive keys, stain-

ed with dark spots of crimson, and by the side of them a naked sword of great finish and of the finest temper, with diamonds set thickly on the hilt. On the floor of the tent, which was overlaid with a Turkish mat of great softness and brilliancy of colours, was negligently strewn the imposing apparel of a soldier : here a casque glittering through a cloud of sable plumes, there a pair of spurs lying upon a steel corslet, which seemed as pliant as the cloth of gold with which it was lined. In a corner were the magnificent trappings of a warhorse ; the gorgeous Andalusian saddle covered with blue cloth, worked in with silver thread, the housings a leopard's hide, the bridle plated with silver, and ornamented with chains of exquisite workmanship in the same metal. An Egyptian ottoman, with a pillow of swan's-down, completed its furniture.

The pavilion itself was of the most elegant and tasteful description. Though its outside reflected the moonbeams from a surface of spotless white, the interior was hung with sky-blue tapestry, on which was represented, in needlework, the first interview between Fernando Cortes and the Emperor Montezuma. From the centre of the tent a purple canopy was suspended, by silken cords, above a spacious arm-chair, covered with a lion's skin and crowned with a coronet. Before it, as if a footstool for his master, whose right foot rested upon his neck, slumbered a beautiful Cuban bloodhound. All around, from the roof down to the thick carpet, hung azure tapestry, thus constituting within it a cabinet as retired and private as if it were buried in the recesses of a palace. It was, however, visibly so much less in dimensions than the broad and lofty canvass pavilion itself, that it was apparent there were other apartments within it, either appropriated as private chambers or anterooms ; and certain cords at intervals of the hangings seemed to have been placed there for the purpose of drawing them aside ; nay, in the rear of the apartment, they were in one place slightly raised, as if some person had passed

through and neglected to drop the folds again quite over the aperture. The whole interior wore that air of luxurious ease and warlike repose which characterized the Spanish gentleman and soldier of that day, whose sumptuous pavilions were redeemed from the softer elegances of a lady's boudoir only by the presence of the knightly arms and insignia of war, that held the place of her lute and embroidery-frame. Like the voluptuous Persian princes of an earlier time, whose tents vied in splendour with the fairy palaces of their poets, and who made war a medium for the display of luxury and magnificence, the conquerors of the New World, dazzled by the wealth which the rich mines of Mexico poured out at their feet, decked themselves profusely in gold and jewels ; all parts of their armour glittered with precious stones ; their war-chargers scarcely moved under the costly weight of silver that loaded their trappings ; while their tents were marked by a commensurate splendour and grandeur.

But, as the empire of the Americas gradually departed from the sceptre of Spain, their luxury proportionally decreased ; yet at this time, and in the display of this pavilion itself, sufficient traces remained of this former state of enervating luxury to convey some idea of what it had been 'in the more palmy days of Spanish power, and, it may also be said, afforded the key to its rapid downfall.

The first stroke of the deep-mouthed bell caused the occupant of the tent to pause in his task. With his pen suspended above the paper, and with his head slightly turned in a listening attitude, he numbered the strokes, as slowly and solemnly they broke, one after another, upon the stillness of night. A lamp, hanging by a chain from the canopy, and diffusing around a soft and equal light, revealed his features as he lifted his head. They were those of a man about forty-two years of age, and of a noble and commanding outline. The forehead was broad and massive, and shaded by dark hair, sprinkled with gray, which also, in thick,

short curls, clung about his neck. His brow was strongly marked with intellect, but ungovernable passions had mingled with it their stormy aspect. His eyes were of a hazel colour, and vivid in their glances as light, yet pleasing in their expression; while above them projected thick eyebrows, which had been arched in childhood, before passion got control, but which impatience of temper had now bent into a stern and habitual frown. His nose was well-shaped, but of that peculiarly aquiline form which is remarked in men of resolute spirits and cruel natures. His lips were full and firm, but around the mouth there seemed to slumber, ready to awake on the least occasion, a voluptuous, if not licentious passion, that gave to the whole features a decided character, which was not a little strengthened by the round, feminine fulness of the chin and throat, and the speaking fire of the intensely brilliant eye. A short mustache, that darkened his upper lip, qualified this trait, in some degree, to the eye of a superficial observer; but to one in the habit of studying the faces of men from the instinctive expression of their features, rather than from their exterior-form and accidental aspect, it was plainly the distinguishing mark of the man. This soft though guilty attribute of his nature spread over his countenance a peculiar tenderness, that seemed to derive its birth from the heart, and was replete with danger to the unsuspecting, and fatal to those who trusted in it. It gave an aspect of mildness to his countenance, and seemed to be twin-born with gentleness, yet knowing no higher origin than that libertine passion, which, on the face of man, is too often mistaken for the virtue to which it bears outward semblance. It is thus that the most evil men sometimes wear faces of the most fascinating mildness of expression; the lingering beams of the glorious beauty that Vice, ere she fell, once shared with her sister Virtue, still shining around her, and which the clouds of guilt cannot altogether obscure. A smile, whether to man or woman, from such a mouth

as that of the individual described, was infinitely more dangerous than the knitting of his stern brows.

His complexion was a ruddy brown, and his face full and fleshy, yet not too much so to be handsome, which it must have been, in an eminent degree, in his youth. His stature was large, and his person manly and full, though not too heavy; for it had scarcely parted with any of the elegance and lightness of more vigorous manhood. He was attired in a black velvet surcoat or long doublet, which descended to his thighs, and had been girded at the waist by a belt of white leather (in which hung the scabbard to the sword that lay on the table); but the belt was unbuckled, and lay across an arm of the chair. This doublet was carelessly left open at the neck, and displayed within ruffles of the finest lace, which also fringed the wrists, and showed the straps of deer's hide which had fastened the corslet within it across the breast. The collar was wide, and lay back flat upon his shoulder, displaying a broad edge of gold lace running down along the front, and also ornamenting the cuffs. On the breast of the surcoat was a richly-marked *cross-gules*, surmounted with the *fleur-de-lis*, the sign of the order of the Knights of Calatrava, and around it sparkled several military stars; while, appended to a broad collar, composed of golden links or rings, curiously interwoven one with the other, hung a single ruby, of great size and marvellous brilliancy, cut in the shape of the Cross of Calvary. He wore an underdress made of buff-coloured buckskin, such as are worn at the present day by officers of rank, which relieved, while they harmonized with, the sable hue of his coat, and gave a certain air of military elegance and finish to his costume. They were open at the knee, with the points loosely hanging, and his feet were thrust into Indian slippers: the negligence and *déshabille* of his whole apparel altogether suited the hour of the night and the privacy of his apartment.

As he numbered the last stroke which proclaimed midnight, he started hastily to his feet:

"Twelve! midnight!" he said, in a tone of surprise. "Time hath flown, or these provincial clocks do note its passage with false tongues. Ho! without!"

The curtain in front of him was instantly drawn aside, a gigantic Ethiopian appeared at the entrance, and, making a salutation so low as to touch the border of his vest, waited to be addressed.

"Hath not Don Henrique yet appeared, Sulem?"

"No, *cadi*," he answered, in the shrill voice of a boy, that sounded most strange and unnatural, coming from one of his stature, and was singularly unpleasant to the ear.

"No intelligence of him?"

"Muley Garcilaso hath come to speech under the skill of the surgeon," answered the Moor, indirectly.

"What said he?" demanded the Spaniard, as if accustomed to his Oriental method of communicating his ideas.

"That the young *cadi* fell in the fray, and that his body was borne off the ground."

"Slain, said he?"

"He knoweth not."

"Be it so or not, these rebellious bourgeois shall answer for their last evening's work, if I stain every hearthstone with the blood of its own household. Is all quiet in the town?"

"Silence hath become your slave, and bound the city in her chains."

"This is well! Seal and direct these despatches. They convey to his majesty intelligence of our success."

The Moor approached the table, and, kneeling on one knee, began to fold and seal the packets with an adroitness and neatness that showed it was no new employment in which he was engaged.

The appearance of this extraordinary private secretary was as striking as the task he was assigned was unusual to personages of his complexion and race. His stature was truly colossal, while his movements,

instead of being unwieldy, like his frame, were remarkable for a certain cat-like stillness and activity, that produced the same sensation in an observer as is caused by the gliding and stealthy motion of the huge anaconda, as he suddenly uncoils his vast length and moves swiftly over the ground to gorge his unsuspecting prey. His skin was of the blackest Ethiopian dye, and his shining black hair fell in a mass, composed of innumerable crisp tresses, to his shoulders. It grew within an inch of his eyebrows, leaving a low, *sinuous* forehead, that was far more deficient in the lines of intelligence than the broad front-head of the hound recumbent beside him. But there was a sparkling light in his coal-black eyes, and a quickness in their motions, that gave indication of cunning and cruelty, attributes which do not often exist to a great extent in men of mean intellect. Satan, without the angelic intellect he possesses, would be Satan no longer.

The remaining features were characteristic of his race: the broad, flat nose, with its thin, transparent nostrils; the full, projecting lips, and abruptly retreating chin. His lips were singularly flexible, and, from their constant motion, he seemed to be habitually in soliloquy with himself, or unconsciously giving his thoughts the shape of words with his mouth; and so expressive was this language without a voice, that an observer could plainly read the operations of a mind which was ever thus betraying itself.

The usual character of his face was that of cautious observation; of seeing without appearing to see. Above all, there was a softness in his eye like a woman's, and he was without beard on lip or cheek. His hands, as he plied his task, appeared delicate and soft; they were well-shaped, extremely small for his size, and remarkable for long, oval nails, which looked like pearls in whiteness and beauty. The fingers glittered with massive gold rings set with topaz and carbuncles, and on each wrist was a bracelet of polished brass, with magic Arabic characters graven upon them. Upon his head was an ample Oriental turban of the

whitest linen, and upon his feet he wore laced boots of red morocco leather, highly ornamented with fringes and embroidery. His legs were buried in Turkish trousers of scarlet silk, of the most voluminous fullness, confined at the waist by a belt, over which was folded a yellow sash, the ends of it descending to his knees. The sleeves of his shirt were long and wide, not gathered at the wrists, and over it was a vest of crimson cloth, elegantly embroidered; above this, and over all, was worn a *haick*, or loose gown of green cloth, something shorter than the vest. In his belt was stuck a brace of small but superb Venetian pistols, and at his side swung a ponderous cimeter, with an iron hilt and scabbard, that, unlike the rest of his costume, seemed worn more for use than personal adornment.

"This packet to the king would better please him if it bore another seal beneath his own," he said, without looking up, impressing, as he spoke, a letter with the royal signet of Spain. There was a meaning hidden in the under-tones in which he said this that caused the Count of Osma, who was, meanwhile, pacing the tent lost in thought, to stop and survey him fixedly.

"What mean you, Sulem?" he inquired, after a moment's survey of his face.

"The signet of the captured province, your excellency," he replied, melting, with an indifferent air, as he spoke, the wax in the flame of a taper that burned in a cruse of olive-oil before him.

"Ha! thou sayest well? Wherefore is not the seal of the city with these keys?" he asked, as if for the first time aware of its absence, pointing sternly to those signs of submission upon the *escritoire*.

"I put the question to Muley Garcilaso when I went on board."

"True, thou hast said thou didst commune with him when he came to himself. What said he?"

"That the Don Henrique took it in safe keeping," answered the Moor, carelessly, but with observant eyes watching the effect of his words.

"Don Henrique ! By the red cross ! I'll warrant as much. He hath ever a meddling with that concerns not himself. It were not a wide guess to make him the cause of this onslaught upon Garcilaso and my brave men-at-arms. He hath kissed a citizen's daughter, and a round dozen of veterans have to shed their blood to pay for it. Would he had been safe under a cardinal's red hood ere I took the tutelage of him on this madcap expedition."

"There may be deep cunning hid beneath his light folly, *cadi*," said the Moor, cautiously lifting his quick eyes to his face.

"Speak out."

"Canst thou not divine his hidden purpose in coming hither with us ?"

"Thou meanest my daughter ! No, no ! she would not have tolled him out of the Moro. He careth not the finger of his glove for the girl ; and, by Dian ! the wench hath as little liking for him in return ! They have quarrelled like very brother and sister all the passage. Had he not a brother that chanced to come into the world a little before him, I should have made my will control hers. As it is, I leave it to time and Cupid."

"It is *not* Lalla Estelle," said the Ethiopian, with deeper meaning.

"Then, in Mohammed's name, out with it, Moor !"

"As a *spy*."

"On what—on whom ?"

"On thee and thy government."

"Your proofs."

"Himself."

"Hath he told thee so ?"

"In his eye, when fixed on thee—in every look and motion."

"Hath he said it ?"

"Not in speech, *cadi*."

"Thou art a fool, Sulem. Because thy own countenance is an open book for men to read thy thoughts in, thou deemest every man's to be the same. Thou

art at fault this time, with all thy subtle knowledge. If I believed this of Don Henrique, he might perish ere I would draw blade to rescue or avenge him. But he hath come as no spy ; it is an idle freak, and because he likes to rove the world better than to wear a monk's gown. Nay, Sulem, if I thought other motives than love of adventure brought him hither, I would hunt him out of every bower and boudoir in the province, and cast him into the deepest dungeon it contains."

"None here, methinks, is so deep as those of Osma," said the Moor, maliciously.

"To me this !" demanded the count, approaching him a step in a menacing manner.

The victim of his wrath crossed his hands on his breast, and sunk his head upon them deprecatingly.

"It is well thou art so useful to me, Sulem, or thy head were, ere this, rolling on the ground. I know that evil and hatred are the moving springs of thy soul ; and that, if thou open thy mouth to speak, bitterness and biting words come forth naturally. Beware again how thou hintest at what none know save thee and me, lest I should take it into my head to become the sole possessor of the secret. Beware ! Don Henrique must be looked after. Hatred alone towards him, and which thou bearest to all men, hath cast this film of suspicion over thy vision. He must be found. As a Spanish knight, I owe this to my honour. If he come to harm, it were as much as my spurs are worth. I will to-morrow demand an explanation with the weapon's point at the naked throats of these traitorous councillors, who alone have stirred the city up to this massacre. Quick with these despatches, and see that they are, by the dawn, in the hands of the captain of the brigantine, and command him that he make sail forth-with for Spain. He hath my private orders already."

The Moor busied himself with the packets, while the Condé paced the floor of the tent with a perplexed air, for some time uncertain what course to adopt in

reference to the citizens who had committed so gross an outrage upon the mission he had despatched to the council-chamber. But a man of his stern and hostile spirit had not room for indecision at such a time. Independent of the indignation that inflamed his bosom at the slaughter of his *garde du corps*, he had a private insult to avenge, remembering the reception he had met with three years previously in the very square and on the selfsame spot on which his pavilion was now pitched. As he thought of this, and summed together the aggravation and divers causes of offence, both recent and by-gone, his soul burned, and he determined, at sunrise, to make an example of several of the chief citizens, by putting them to death in the Place d'Armes. If it should also appear that Don Henrique had been slain in the affray, he resolved, for certain reasons, which, it will be plain hereafter, had more to do with his own standing and interest with the Cortes and with his monarch, when his death should be known to them, than with any regard for the young Castilian, to convert the town into a heap of ashes in retribution thereof. Such was the revengeful and merciless determination he had formed in his own mind, when the shrill, unpleasant voice of the Ethiopian startled him from his meditations, as, rising from his knee, he informed him that the despatches were sealed and directed.

"See to them when I have done with thee," he replied; and then, in a voice that partook of the stern and savage nature of his recent decision, he said, "Now take your pen and write as I shall dictate."

He then, in a few brief words, every letter of which breathed conflagration and blood, dictated an order, which this confidential secretary took down with extraordinary rapidity. It was addressed to the several captains of his army, and was thus worded:

"Headquarters, Place d'Armes, }
12 o'clock night, Sept. 10th, 1767. }

"You are ordered to have your command under arms half an hour before sunrise. At sunrise you will re-

ceive orders to sack the town. The public buildings and dwellings on the Place d'Armes are to be spared.

"(Signed)

OSMA,

"Lieutenant-general of the armies of Spain, Governor and Captain-general of the province of Louisiana."

"Make sealed copies of this," he added, as it was completed, "and despatch them by safe bearers to the different officers in the square, and to those commanding at the outposts and guardhouses."

"If Don Henrique appear in the meanwhile—"

"The order will be countermanded."

"And," continued the Moor, significantly, "those chief citizens you spoke of will instead—?"

"Thou art ever awake to bloodshed! Fear me not, Sulem. I will give them to the tender mercies of thy cimeter; for the slaughter of my men-at-arms must be atoned for by their lives."

The countenance of the Moor lighted up, and his lips moved with the silent expression of his satisfaction, while, half drawing his weapon from the sheath, he addressed congratulatory words to it, as if it had been a sentient being. He speedily completed the copies of the order, and, with a low obeisance, laid them at the feet of his master.

"Give them to my pages without, and bid them say to those to whom they may bear them, to see that they break not the seal until they hear a gun fired at the dawn of day. If by any chance this purpose should get wind, the bourgeois may have time to arm themselves, and give us trouble. Depart!"

CHAPTER IX.

ESTELLE AND THE CONDE.

THE Ethiopian hid the orders within his breast, and, lifting the hangings, disappeared as he had entered. For a few moments the Count of Osma fixed his eyes vacantly upon the waving tapestry, while in his heart he was striving to justify the deed he had resolved on against the arguments of his conscience.

"They have merited it if it do fall upon them," he soliloquized, turning and pacing the tent with the measured step of one who habitually walked when in thought. "Did they not, three years since, rend in pieces the national flag of Spain? Did they not cut down my whole body-guard, and leave me the only alternative of a disgraceful flight? Have they not withstood our arms till now, and the last night repeated anew the outrage upon my guards; wounded to the death a noble Spanish gentleman, and perhaps slain one, a drop of whose blood alone hath more value in the eyes of Carlos and the Cortes than even an Osma dare answer for? If he be not heard from by sunrise, my orders shall be executed. What if there be truth in this suspicion of Sulem! By the cross, the Moor may have ground for it. If it should be true—the youth is in *my* power, not I in *his*! For my acts I am accountable to no one but those from whom I derive my rank and authority. If I do well or ill, what avails his espionage, unless, indeed, he be secretly delegated with higher powers than mine? This may be! If so, let him first produce them if he would rule in my stead, and my last act of power shall be exerted to destroy him, if he were the Infante himself."

Thus ran the thoughts of the crafty governor, his own active fears and consciousness of a criminal life

now condemning, now excusing alternately both himself and the object of his thoughts, and magnifying suspicions and malignant hints, that originated in a hateful and wanton spirit, into certainties. Garcia Ramirez, the Count of Osma, was no ordinary man. Though only in the prime of life, he had risen to the highest rank a subject can hold in the armies of Spain. This elevation he owed to his extraordinary ambition, love of war, undaunted bravery, and a masterly skill in military science. He was descended from a noble Castilian line; the founder of his family, Condé Velasquez Osma, having greatly distinguished himself in the conquest of Granada, both in numerous single combats, and in capturing one of the strongest holds of Boabdil, which Isabella afterward conferred upon him as a reward for his bravery. His descendant, the present Count Garcia, was the younger of two brothers, the elder of whom, it was said, fell from the battlements of one of the towers into the sea, near which, on a high rock, the Castle of Osma was built; but suspicion gave out other rumours to account for his sudden and mysterious disappearance, for the credibility of which, the ambitious and cruel character of the young Garcia afforded sufficient foundation. But Spain was too much torn at the period by civil contests for so slight a matter to create any sensation, if the rumour ever reached the government, which was doubtful; the younger brother assumed the title and vast estate of his deceased brother, Don Louis, without question or hindrance, and the rumour was soon forgotten. Arms soon became his passion, and, favoured by one or two acts of personal valour and his family influence, at the age of twenty-three he was made a lieutenant-colonel, and sent into Africa to demand of the Moors reparation for certain acts of piracy committed on Spanish ships. A battle took place within a league of Morocco, and Osma was defeated and taken prisoner. After several months' bondage he made his escape, and suddenly appeared at the court of Madrid, where he once more offered his services to the king. He

was now remarkable for being attended by a hideous Moor, who followed his footsteps like his shadow, slept at his feet, rode by his side in battle, and without whom, indeed, he never appeared abroad. It was reported that he personally educated the unsightly Moor in the language and customs of Spain, and that, as his knowledge of both increased, he made him controller of his affairs, and eventually his private secretary and confidant; some dared to say, indeed, that he was also made his instrument of vengeance when a man's life stood between him and his fierce passions or sanguinary ambition.

A few months after his return from captivity in Africa, he married the only daughter of the Marquis de la Torre, who died a few years afterward, leaving an infant daughter of great beauty and promise. When she was at the age of thirteen, the father of Estelle, or *Lil*, as he fondly pet-named her, took her away from the convent, where he had left her to be educated, and made her his companion in the field, taught her the art of fearless horsemanship, of fence and defence, to wield the cimeter, dart the spear, and fire pistol or hand-gun with accurate aim. She attended him in his battles, riding by his side, with the gigantic Ethiopian at her rein, protecting her from danger like the fabled genii guarding a princess, who hath commanded his services by the charm of magic. Yet her warlike education, under the eye of so great a warrior, took from her but little of the softness and gentle manner of maidens of her age. She was bold, but not masculine; boldness such as hers serving only to heighten the charm of her singular beauty. Her eye was blue as heaven, and full of light and intelligence; and though it never quailed with fear, it was soft as the mountain gazelle's in its expression; and though it might flash like the eagle's as she galloped beside her father into the battle, it could droop like the turtle-dove's when thoughts of tenderness filled her soul, as if young love had rested upon the lid. She was not spoiled by her father's indulgence, for he tenderly loved her, though

the severity of his nature was mingled with his affection. She returned his affection with her whole heart, and, by her irresistible love, beauty, and devotion, held an influence over him that rendered her, in some degree, a spirit of good sent from heaven to control the evil he would do. His stern spirit yielded to her gentleness, and his affection could seldom deny her requests when eloquently and tearfully urged for some victim of his displeasure or vengeance. For, although the Condé of Osma possessed the revolting traits of character that have been asserted of him, yet there was one current of gentleness flowing through his heart that had not been darkened by the foul streams of vice that ran beside it: towards his daughter it showed itself in the shape of paternal love; but towards the young and lovely of her sex it was less pure, and assumed the turbid aspect of sensuality. In his bearing towards women he was gay, gallant, and fascinating; it was only to those of his own sex that he manifested a certain haughtiness of port and sternness of speech that usually characterized his intercourse with those around him.

He now appears with his Ethiopian confidant on the scene of action after the lapse of eighteen years from his captivity by the Moorish emperor, Sidi Mohammed, and, save in increase of years and in guilt—for this period of the eventful life of the Condé de Osma had not been passed without more than one instance of dark and fearful crime—they were still the same inseparable, mysterious pair, united by some unknown, and, men thought, unholy compact. Some, indeed, hinted at a familiar spirit, while all believed the two were linked together soul with soul in secret guilt. The officers loathed the presence of the Moor, and avoided him, while the common soldiers looked upon him with fear and superstitious dread.

The commission of the Condé de Osma, which appointed him governor and captain-general of the province of Louisiana, bore date "Aranjuez, April 16th, 1767," and conveyed to him the special power to es-

tablish, in this new part of the king's dominions, with regard to the military force, police, administration of justice, and finances, such a form of government as might most effectually secure its dependance and subordination, and promote the king's service and the happiness of his subjects. To carry out these ends, he was to be supported by a military force equal to three times the number of persons capable of bearing arms in the colony, one half of which he had now brought with him. He was accompanied on board his ships by several Spanish gentlemen, of whom he was to form his council or *cabildo*, which was to be composed of six perpetual *regidores*, two ordinary *alcaldes*, an attorney-general syndic, and a secretario; over which body he was to preside in person. Besides these, he was attended by the *alferez-real*, or royal standard-bearer, the provincial *alcalde*, his *alguazil mayor*, and receiver of fines. Besides these, other necessary steps had been taken for the absolute Spanish rule of the city and province. His powers over all were of an extraordinary nature, and from his decision, both in criminal as well as in civil cases, there was no appeal but to the king; and this could be made and transmitted to him only through the *cabildo*, which was to be composed of Osma's own creatures, beyond whom a complaint was scarce likely to find its way. A remote delegated power is the greatest evil a monarch can inflict upon his subjects. Injustice, oppression, and tyranny are ever its fruits. Such was the character of the man who was now thoughtfully pacing the pavilion! Such was the soldier who had long led the armies of Spain! Such was the governor who was now to rule over Louisiana!

The Moor had not been long absent from the apartment, and the Condé still gloomily paced the gorgeous carpets, his step giving back no sound from the thick, soft texture. His mind was occupied now with suspicions of the young Don Henrique; now with the contemplation of his own unforgotten wrongs at the hands of the bourgeois, and the prospect of the mor-

row's revenge ; and with ambitious visions of his future power and grandeur. Suddenly the arras behind his chair of state moved slightly, as if stirred with the wind ; and a female hand, like ivory for brightness and beauty, was thrust through an opening in the folds, grasped the tassel of the silk cord that passed across them, and, with a timid, hesitating manner, drew aside the hanging, showing another apartment within. He was too much occupied with his thoughts to observe this. There was a pause, as if the intruder were surveying the cabinet before entering it ; and then a beautiful creature, with sun-bright hair, large, glorious blue eyes, and a complexion like the lily from which the dew has just fallen, stepped forth, and, with her hands folded across her bosom, stood in his path.

"My daughter !" he exclaimed, sharply, as if displeased at the intrusion ; but his angry glance was arrested as it met her lovely person, wrapped loosely in a night-robe, that was folded about her limbs like the richest drapery of sculpture, displaying the exquisite grace of her figure, as if the effect of studied statuary, and encountered the bright beauty of her face, about which the unconfined hair fell like a cloud of light. None would have recognised in her the bold, free maiden that rode beside the Condé on his landing. It seemed a radiant vision that met his eyes. The father was entranced by the daughter's charms ! He could not speak the sudden anger that rose to his lips ! He could only gaze with all a parent's pride upon her, while tenderness took the place of rising displeasure.

"What has disturbed thee, Lil ?" he asked, smiling affectionately and kissing her, and then holding her back to gaze upon her enchanting face.

"I have not slept since the midnight bell, signor," she said, with a glance at himself and then at the *escritoire*, which he easily interpreted.

"You are a silly girl, Lil," he answered, tapping her on the chin ; "and, were it not that you look just now so much more angelic and more like your mother

than usual, I could be well angry with you. So you have been a listener to my cabinet secrets?"

"I have, father."

"And, like a child, and a woman who knows her power, have left your couch to sue for grace to these graceless bourgeois, I'll warrant thee!"

"Thou wilt not do this thing, signor!"

"Lil, my fawn, I love you more than I have loved any human being. But even love hath its bounds. Ask me not what I cannot grant, that I may not have the pain of refusing thee."

"Father, I love you also too well to have thee do wrong. How will it be told in Spain that the brave Count of Osma hath declared war against women and children?"

"How mean you, girl?" he asked, surveying her glowing countenance as it warmed with the feelings of her heart. "It is against men in arms—rebels—and assassins, as the last night's work hath shown."

"If you fire their dwellings, and let loose the soldiery with the broad license of indiscriminate slaughter," she answered, with firmness, "will not every threshold become an altar of blood for the sacrificing of mother and child? If the men of the town have done evil, father, let them be heard in fair defence, and, if proved guilty, adjudged by the king. Let not their blood be on thee and thine."

"If they have done evil, daughter!" he repeated, with warmth; "have they not resisted our arms, rebelled against their lawful sovereign, and slain fifteen Spanish men within the twelve hours?"

"Men have been slain, sir," she said, steadily, but with the filial respect in her voice and manner that became a daughter; "but, in truth, are these councilors, or the citizens whom you condemn, guilty of crime against the state? They were not Spanish citizens or voluntary Spanish subjects when they did this. The flag of France was still waving over the province, and the laws of that kingdom retained their empire in

it. I do not think, sir, it constituted an offence against the state."

"St. James save us, girl!" he cried, more in humour than displeasure; "you are half a rebel yourself. France has no more to do with them, nor they with France, than with the Grand Seigneur. They are rebels all, and as such shall be treated. Go to bed."

"They did not acknowledge the right of Spain; they were still French subjects. You cannot, sir, contend that they could bear the yokes of two sovereigns. How can you expect to command the submission and obedience of these colonists, until you make known to them your character and powers? How can his majesty count on their allegiance before he has extended to them his protection?"

"By the rood, if thou art not infected with disloyalty to the very core, girl," he said, with harshness. "I have taught thee arms, and made a gallant soldier of thee; and the devil hath finished by making thee a pleading attorney."

"Nay, be not angry with me, signor," she said, laying her hand upon his arm, and looking deprecatingly up into his face; "I would spare bloodshed and avert misery. If they had been born subjects of Spain, they were then rebels, and deserving of punishment. Send and countermand thy cruel order."

"There is a statute of Alfonzo the Eleventh, which is the first law of the seventh title of the first partida, which denounces the punishment of death and confiscation of property against those who excite any insurrection against the king or state, or take up arms under pretence of extending their liberty or rights, whether subjects born, or acquired by conquest or by treaty."

"True, sir; death and confiscation, indeed, but not conflagration and massacre. Let the chiefs of the rebellion be arraigned before thee, and stand or fall as they shall be proven guilty or innocent. This law, sir, giveth thee no such power as you would exercise."

"My power is delegated, and independent of written

statute. Life and death are in my hands, until the judiciary of the cabildo be established. But, my child, I have not ordered the city to be treated like a town carried by storm for this offence of rising in arms alone."

"But from personal revenge, sir," she said, boldly. "It is more noble to forgive, my father."

"Nay, daughter, your quick and blunt honesty of spirit hath made thee forget that I am thy father."

"Forgive me, sir," she cried, pressing his forehead with her bright lips, which had pleaded so eloquently and so well. "If I have in anything gone out of my filial duty, it is from pity for these bourgeois, who, if Don Henrique appears not, will, ere long, be houseless and wandering in the fair land God has given them."

"Thou hast it. It is for Don Henrique I have done this."

"I will answer, the city hath naught to do with his absence."

"Thou art not a good listener, or thou wouldst have learned from Sulem that Garcilaso saw him struck down. Should I not visit them with vengeance for this? How else am I to account to the king and Cortes if he be slain? Shall I let his death pass by as if he were a plebeian? Thou knowest he likes me not, and that I have small friendship for him in return; but his absence, nevertheless, must be looked to. If he return not in safety, I will do what I have commanded. The city shall be fired and sacked. The king will demand it."

"And a million of the king's property, and many lives of his subjects, will be sacrificed. Is this doing the king service, my father?"

"Out upon thy inquisition, Estelle! I have borne it full patiently. Now I look upon thee, much of thy loveliness hath departed with the admission of this plebeian pity into thy blood. Thy complexion hath a rebel tinge, got from thy thoughts. Go to thy couch, and sleep! My orders have gone forth, and shall be obeyed. Not even thy love," he continued, with a

stern and vindictive look, that caused her to shrink involuntarily, though her clear azure eye quailed not, as, full of virtuous resolution, it encountered his; "not thy love, as it hath done before, to my grievous hurt and often shame, shall turn me. Heaven itself hath not power to move me from my purpose. The town shall lie in ashes, and its councillors swing between earth and air, though the foul fiend in person should cry hold!"

"Hold!" instantly echoed a voice near him, that made his heart stand still with fear.

CHAPTER X.

OSMA AND THE SORCERESS.

HE turned, and beheld standing before him a tall figure, wrapped to the mouth in a large gray mantle, like the *haick* worn by the Moors, which swept the ground, its head nearly buried in a deep cowl, through which glared upon him a pair of glittering eyes, like the burning orbs of a tigress shining in the dark.

"Sathanas! avoid thee!" he cried, lifting between himself and the object of his superstitious fear the ruby cross that hung from his neck.

There was no reply, no voice, no movement from the mysterious being, who had appeared, as if by supernatural power, in the very midst of his tent, though surrounded by a triple guard. There was no answer, but the steady, fixed, and burning glance, that seemed to scorch his soul. His own fearless eye quailed as he strove to return the look; his face became pale, and, clasping his daughter by the arm, he seemed, for a moment, as if he would sink into the ground. His fear was too great and unnatural to be caused wholly by the supposition that his challenge had been replied to by

the fiend himself. It was, from his looks, evidently connected with some recognition of, or association with, the figure.

"Father, my father!" cried the noble girl—who had no dark and secret crime to answer for, and to whom innocence gave courage—on witnessing his mental terror, "be thyself. It is mortal like thyself."

"Dost thou believe it, child?" he asked, with incredulous alarm, in a low tone, covering his eyes with his hands.

"Fear it not: my father, what dreadful thing hath come over thee?"

"Hath it spoken?" he asked, with terror, without noticing her words.

"Nay, I will make it speak," she cried, resolutely. "'Tis fearful to see thee tremble so like a woman. Surely Heaven hath suddenly taken from thee thy soldierly spirit! I will relieve thee or die."

She seized, as she spoke, the naked sword that lay upon the escritoire, and, quicker than thought, levelled it at the heart of the silent and fearful intruder.

"Speak, mysterious being!" she cried, with a sudden and fearless intrepidity, her soul armed by her father's pitiable state; "speak! or this steel shall prove whether thou be flesh or spirit."

There was no movement of the silent lips; the eyes were fixed still upon the trembling Condé like a withering charm.

"Nay, then, if thou art flesh, I will make a spirit of thee," she said, and threw herself forward with the sword; but it struck ringing upon a vest of mail, and shivered in her grasp. The sound instantly roused the count from his torpor of fear. Beneath a steel corslet he knew must beat a mortal heart; and, if hitherto he had believed he had seen a spirit, all his fear now at once forsook him, and the stern man and daring soldier returned.

"Ho, treason! we are beset!" he shouted, drawing a short dagger from his bosom, and assuming the attitude of one prepared for attack or defence. "Ho, guards without there!"

"Spare thy voice, Count of Osma," said the individual, with irony; "it will scarce be heeded by those who permitted me to enter thy tent."

"Ho, Sulem! Moor! Ha, am I betrayed? Who art thou? Who hath admitted thee?"

"My own power. Who I am thou wilt know in the day when thy cup of guilt shall be full!" was the stern and menacing answer.

"What would you with me?" he cried, turning pale and dropping the point of his dagger, yet looking as if he would shrink from an interview which he felt he could not avoid.

"Thou art not alone."

"Nay, 'tis but my child."

"Wilt thou, then, I should speak with thee before her?" asked the stranger, with a significant sneer, concluding the words with a low laugh that chilled his blood.

"Lil, leave me," he said, with an assumed indifference of tone, observing her look from one to the other with suspicion and alarm; "I have business with this stranger, that, it is hinted, will not be fitting for a third ear. Seek thy couch, and court the sleep that hath been so untimely chased from thy pillow."

"Nay, I will stay with thee. I will not leave thee," she said, firmly. "Thou wilt speak to the father in the daughter's presence?" she added, addressing the extraordinary intruder.

"If the father will," answered the same cold and mocking voice.

"It may not be, child," he said, sternly. "If afterward it prove of moment or interest to thee, thou shalt hear it. Leave me."

The imperative command conveyed in the last words she felt it would be dangerous to disobey; so, embracing him, and whispering in his ear a prayer for the victims of the morrow, she cast a glance of mingled dread and curiosity upon the silent figure, and retired within the tent.

For an instant after her departure the Condé kept his gaze fixed upon the place where she had vanished,

as if fearful to turn and encounter again the power of that eye which had frozen his blood.

"We are well met, Garcia of Osma," at length said the stranger, taking a stride towards him, and placing a brown, skinny finger upon his wrist.

"Who art thou?" he cried, shrinking from the touch, "that intrudest at midnight into my tent, and seekest to alarm my fears with dark words and darker hints?"

"Thou wilt not know me if I utter the name men like thee know me by. Thou wilt not know me if I let thee look upon my features."

"Who art thou, then, in Heaven's name?"

"Thou didst but now believe me to be the shade of Don Louis Ramarez, thine elder brother, whom thou last saw in such a garb!"

"Dost read my thoughts—dost know that deed?" he cried, in amazement, and with a look of guilty horror. "Fiend! thou art come from hell to mock me!"

"Nay, Don Garcia, it matters not whence I come. It is enough if thou acknowledgest my power over thee; for I have a request to make thou wilt scarce grant without first fearing me."

"What wouldst thou have? my soul, dread being?" he asked, shuddering.

"Nay, but I would control thy guilty mind, and make it the obedient slave of my will," was the cool reply.

"*Thou* do it!" he repeated, roused by the words to his former haughty pride and self-possession, and forgetting his fears in his quick indignation; "*thou* control the mind of Garcia of Osma! It should not bend to the will of Lucifer. By the rood! thou art an impostor, who hath raked up a buried rumour, and comest hither to fling it in my ears to frighten me withal!"

"And how did I come hither?" repeated the stranger, in a quiet tone.

"That is the greatest wonder, and my tent thus guarded! Ho, Sulem, slave!"

"The Moor hath done his duty, and still lieth with his huge body across thy tent door."

"How passed you him, and how that triple guard?"

"By my power."

The count trembled.

"Art thou supernatural, and is thine errand here for good or evil?"

"Both for good and evil. Wilt thou acknowledge my power, proud Spaniard?"

The Condé paced the floor with a bent brow, and hurried, uncertain step for a few seconds, and then, looking up, said with firmness,

"I know not thy purpose nor who thou art. Thou hast appeared before me mysteriously, and outmastered the sleepless watchfulness of Sulem. Thou hast shown, too, a knowledge of a secret I thought deposited in only two bosoms, and thou hast guessed the thought of my fear when first I beheld thee, enwrapped in that gray garment, which hath associations, I need not tell thee, who already knowest so much, I would not willingly recall. All this is marvellous, and may be accounted for on natural grounds, and referred to mortal causes; therefore, most mysterious being, ere thou canst subdue my spirit to thine, thou must show deeper knowledge than thou hast done. Thus far I acknowledge thy wonderful power. Yet it can be measured by the human mind, and its depths fathomed. There is one secret of my life, if thou canst tell it, I will confess thee more than mortal. If thou failest to do it, thou shalt be cut to pieces for the secret thou already hast." The Count of Osma spoke like a man whom guilt and fear had rendered desperate, and as if determined to stake all upon a final cast.

"That secret hath a key."

"Name it."

"It is the signet by which I passed your guard, and led captive the will of the submissive Moor."

Speaking these words, this extraordinary individual stretched forth a dark, shrivelled arm, from which the robe had fallen, showing, to his infinite surprise, the form and garb of a female beneath, and on the finger of the hand exhibited to his eye a private signet set

in a peculiar fashion, and bearing the arms of the house of Osma, with a Moor's turban for a crest.

He gazed upon it for an instant with starting eyeballs, and then, leaping forward and grasping the finger that bore it with a convulsive hold, surveyed it closely, with an intensity of astonishment and despair that language cannot depict. Suddenly he touched a concealed spring in it, and his own miniature, taken in youth, met his eyes. He looked up then into the face of the other, and cried, gasping,

"The name—the name—if thou knowest the name—"

"Zillah!" she answered, in the deep, guttural voice that distinguished her.

"Thou hast conquered! Do with me what thou wilt," he said, and sank down into his state-chair nearly lifeless.

The singular being who had shown such wonderful power over the mind of the boldest and fiercest man of the age, save that secret guilt and the superstition of the times enslaved his soul, gazed upon him for a few moments with a look of triumph mingled with pity. Then, lifting her eyes heavenward, and crossing her hands upon her bosom, she said, fervently,

"Now Allah be praised! He hath given my greatest enemy into my hands!"

Her cowl fell back in this extraordinary act of devotion, and the lamp cast its rays upon a harsh and haggard countenance, with a broad yellow forehead impressed with innumerable minute lines of age; shaggy white hair, a high, prominent nose, and a mouth with a nervous strength and stern fierceness of expression, that gave indication of a wild, implacable spirit, that knew no master save its own will. Beneath thick, shaggy brows, which time had whitened, glared a pair of fiery, bloodshot eyes, like globes of heated iron; and so unearthly was their piercing lustre that no human eye could encounter them unblenchingly. Their expression was that of wakeful vengeance, of watchful suspicion, and of implacable hatred, which

the act she was for the instant engaged in did not diminish : it seemed to have been superinduced by some circumstances of an extraordinary nature, rather than originally to have belonged to her character, as if deep wrong, and deferred but ever-sought retribution, had given to this feature the expression of the passion that filled her soul. Her hair was white as wool, and, contrasting strangely with her dark countenance, fell down over her breast and back in long shining strands, that gave a singular aspect to her features and majesty to her person.

When she had ended her brief orison of gratitude, she dropped the entire robe, and displayed a singularly thin figure, erect as an arrow, above six feet in height, and slender as a skeleton. A short tunic of blue cotton, a green petticoat, a corsage of yellow silk, and sandals bound upon naked feet, completed her costume. Her arms were bare and long, and adorned with broad bracelets of solid brass. Her haggard neck was encircled by several necklaces of coral and ebony, to which were appended divers charms and amulets, one of which, in the shape of a tortoise, was remarkable for being composed of a single amethyst of great size and beauty. In her right hand she carried a small black wand, covered with cabalistic signs and letters, done in pearl, and ornamented at one end with a miniature death's head carved from human bone. At her waist, in a broad blue girdle, on which were represented, in brilliant colours, the signs of the zodiac, she wore a long, sharp knife, and a pair of those small but highly-finished Algerine pistols so celebrated at that period. From within the folds of her vest appeared the shining surface of the polished steel corslet which had resisted the sword of the Condé's spirited daughter, and which she doubtless found it necessary to wear in the mode of life she chose to lead. It will be seen, from this description, that she was no spirit or supernatural being, and, from what had hitherto passed between her and the Count of Osma, that her power was a moral one, and had for its basis her

knowledge, which he now believed to be supernatural, of certain crimes he had committed, and which he had thought were known only to Heaven and himself, and perhaps his slave and confidant Sulem. From the character of the ornaments of her person, she appeared to be a chief or priestess of that class of Morisco necromancers, or worshippers of the Prince of the Air, who once held such influence over the minds of the Orientalists, and by their deep sagacity and cunning, and through their knowledge of men's hearts and intimate acquaintance with the avenues to their passions, exerted an influence over even kings and emperors, enslaving their minds, and receiving the homage of their souls and the services of their bodies. But, whatever might be her profession, her power in the present instance was acknowledged by the object of it.

If the Count of Osma had reason to believe her to be a being of another world on account of her knowledge, he had now, in her present wild and singular dress as a sorceress, in the extraordinary height and exility of her remarkably attenuated person, in the wildness of her air and aspect, and the enthusiastic malignity of her countenance, which seemed in himself to have found its object, additional reason to look upon her with dread and evil apprehension. Like most Roman Catholics of that day, Garcia Ramirez was superstitious. He firmly believed, as an article of his faith, in the infinitude of saints and guardian angels that mingled familiarly in human affairs, as well as in troops of evil spirits that went to and fro in the earth working ill to mankind. The belief in supernatural agency was rife in the early part of the last century, and even down to this time, few men, however elevated their intellects or brave their hearts, were above its influence. Miracles increased in the Romish Church, and spirits, both of good and of evil, were made to appear to the eyes of the people at will, for the growth and quickening of their faith; menacing apparitions were said to have made nightly visits

to the couches of wicked kings and cruel lords; while witches or soceresses, wizards or necromancers, as England, the south of Europe, or Africa were the scenes of their work, left mankind little room for rational judgment, and witchcraft and enchantment, spells and charms, almost subverted the moral law of nature. The world itself seemed to lie under a charm, and the enchanted days of the Persian tales to have returned. In Great Britain, her colonies, and other Protestant countries, many a supposed witch paid the forfeit of her life at the stake; but in Spain and the south of Europe, as well as in Barbary and Morocco, where their numbers were far more numerous, and their pretensions and acts more daring and marvellous, they were too much feared to be prosecuted, and habitual religious superstition soon taught men to convert fear into downright awe. The wand of these *charm*ers had been broken in England and America nearly half a century before Spain and the south of Europe had thrown off their allegiance to this so wonderful and mysterious a power, which, real or feigned on the part of its agents, will remain for ever one of the most extraordinary characteristics of the century in which it appeared, and stand in all ages a witness to the darkness of the human intellect, the nothingness of human learning, and the foolishness of human wisdom.

Such being the preparation of the mind of a man of that age for supernatural events, it is not surprising that the bold yet superstitious Count of Osma should at first have looked upon his visitant, who seemed to wear the garb and height of one he believed to be in his grave, as a visitant from the unseen world; or, when she told him all that ever he did, he should so readily admit her spiritual agency, nor wonder, as a man of the present age would do, that such a thing should be. Now, sober reason and cooler judgment hold the balance of men's minds, and all things, however extraordinary the aspect in which they show themselves, however high may appear their claim to the supernatural, must be tested by

the even weights of probability, and measured by the skeptic eye of cause and necessity, ere the claims be admitted and their empire fully acknowledged. Shakspeare, writing in this age, would have some other *point d'appui* on which to frame his story of Hamlet than his father's ghost.

The mind of the Count of Osma bowed to the power that he believed to be supernatural. He was awed by her knowledge, and his soul shook with the guilty apprehensions with which awakened memory filled his bosom. She continued to gaze upon him with mingled hatred and contempt for a few moments as he sat in his chair, his head sunk upon his breast, and his forehead covered by his hand, and then addressed him in a voice of triumphant scorn, as if she would use the power she saw she possessed by her secret to its utmost extent. As he gazed upon her, he thought of the fearful visit Brutus had received, and the words "I am thy evil genius, Brutus," came to his mind, as she said, in a deep, warning voice,

"Garcia Ramirez, I said we were well met. I have prayed Allah sixteen long years for this hour, and it has come. I see thee at my feet, writhing with guilt and trembling with fear. It is thus thou shouldst be before those whom thou hast wronged."

"Wronged, dread sorceress!" he said, looking up, yet scarce daring to encounter the stern gaze she fixed upon him. "I have wronged Heaven, but not thee. I know thee not, save that I believe thou hast commerce with the unseen world, and bearest in thine eyes hatred towards me."

"Thou wilt know me, and wherein thou hast wronged me, black-hearted Osma, but not to-night. I am a messenger of vengeance to thee, but thy time has not yet come. A bloody day in thy life's calendar will soon fall, and then wilt thou know me."

"St. Michael's day?"

"So, so! Ha, ha! haughty noble!" and she laughed derisively; "oh how quick is guilt in a seared conscience. Thou hast truly named the day's anniversary I mean."

"Thou art a fearful woman."

"Then obey me. I am in thy tent this night not to play with thy fears nor trifle with thy crimes; thou art a bad man, and it became needful that thou shouldst know that there is one more terrible than thou, who hath thy destiny in her hands, and will watch thy rule with a jealous scrutiny, for there is one within this city's gates dear to me as the apple of my eye. In being her guardian, I am the city's."

"How mean you?" he demanded, with quickness, yet with reverence, marking the menacing tone in which she spoke the last words, and fearing lest she had known and would step between him and his coveted vengeance.

"That not a roof shall blaze, nor a head fall on the morrow for this night's work."

"By the cross of St. James! woman, thou presumest too far," he cried, starting up, his fear of her power suddenly swallowed up in his resentment at this broad asseveration. "If thou be linked with devils, thou art flesh and blood, and good steel will tell in it. I know and fear thy power, but I will not be its slave. Speak to me again of this, and I may take mind to be the sole repository of my own secrets. Thou knowest too much for thou and I to live in the same elements. 'Fore Heaven! I know not what keepeth my hand back from slaying thee where thou standest." His eyes flashed, and his spirit got the mastery over his superstitious dread. He held his dagger in a menacing attitude, and for an instant his eye flashed back the lightning of her own.

"It is because thou darest not do it," she said, with a stern dignity, that suited well her commanding air. "In thy hand steel is powerless when it would strike at my life. I am flesh and blood, as thou sayest. My power over thee is of earth, and the secret of it thy own guilty conscience. I boast no supernatural knowledge therein, yet am I not a whit behind, in mine art, that arch-priestess who bade one of thy prophets rise from the tomb in the mouldered cerements of the dead, and stand before living men."

"Woman, hast thou power over the dead?" he asked, stepping backward from her with awe.

"Ay; I can make the murdered stand a bleeding ghost before his murderer; walk before his eyes a fleshless skeleton, clanking his bones; or watch his midnight pillow with grim visage, chattering his ivory jaws; or, wrapped in a winding-sheet, cross his lonely path, with one finger ever pointing to a wound, one hand to heaven; or, if thou wilt, I can make him appear as when he lived, tall and stately, with cowl and long gray cloak, till all should think he lived again—save for the blazing eyeballs and cold death-touches of his flesh."

"Hold! terrible being, my brain is on fire. Cease, or thou wilt drive me mad! Spare thy power, in the name of the blessed angels! and I will be thy slave."

"'Tis well. Art thou prepared to do my will?" she asked, with the same unbending sternness that characterized her throughout.

"Name it, and if it be aught that endangereth not my precious soul's salvation—"

"Thy salvation! Hast thou a soul to be saved, Count of Osma?" she fiercely demanded, contempt and irony mingled in her harsh tones.

"Yea, sorceress, unless thou hast robbed me of it by thy unholy arts," he answered, with alarm visible on his features.

"Ha! ha! Thou hast no need to fear me, Garcia of Osma!" she said, laughing scornfully. "Thy precious soul is best in thine own keeping till it hath filled up its measure of wickedness. It is too late for thee to care for it now."

"Heaven hath forgiveness for the deepest crime, woman."

"On repentance, so says thy Koran."

"What is repentance? Do I not regret the past?" he said, sadly.

"That is not the repentance thy prophet hath commanded. Let thy hand refrain from evil. What wrong thou hast once done, do thou no more. This is repentance, and such as thou hast never known, and never

wilt know. Evil will ever be in thy right hand. Thy soul! Ha! ha! Trouble not thyself, count—it is cared for."

"Be it as thou sayest. Holy Church hath indulgences."

"Which thy ill-gotten gold will scarce purchase. But fear not! My desire of thee will not endanger thy soul's welfare. Thou hast given orders to sack the city at dawn."

"Ha! has Sulem—"

"Be calm, knight! When I know so much, is it a strange thing I should know this? Thou hast resolved to lay the city in ashes. Light a torch, and it shall be to kindle thine own death-pyre."

"The command has gone forth, and the day dawns."

"It becomes thee to be the more speedy. Obey!"

"It shall be done, so I see thy face no more."

"We must meet once, twice—nay, *thrice* more!" she said, solemnly.

"May it not be, mysterious woman?"

"It may not."

"If I see thee not after St. Michael's day, I will do thy bidding."

"Thou shalt not."

"The city is then safe. Thou that knowest so much, canst tell me aught of a young Spanish cavalier that hath disappeared?"

"He is safe."

"Then shall it be as thou wilt."

"Write me the order—nay, thy secretary shall do it for thee! Absulem Hassan!"

The curtain was swept aside, and in an instant the Ethiopian stood submissively before her, and, without looking at his lord, fixed his eyes expectantly upon the face of the sorceress. The expression of his countenance was that of the deepest awe and reverence. The count saw this with wonder. Where had the slave been that he obeyed not his voice! How knew she a name he himself had not called him by for years! He gazed in silent surprise.

"Absulem Hassan, write as thy master shall dictate," she said, authoritatively, pointing to the *escritoire*, while her commanding eye was turned threateningly upon the noble.

Without a word, the count motioned with his hand for the slave to kneel at the table.

"Thy secretary waits for thee," she said to him, impatiently.

"Write a countermand of the order of twelve o'clock, in these words," he said :

*"Headquarters, Place d'Armes,
1 A.M., September 10.*

"The order issued at midnight is countermanded.

"(Signed)

"OSMA,

"Governor and Captain-general."

"It is enough. Place copies of them in my hand. I will see that they are delivered to thy captains."

She received from the Moor the sealed orders, and, folding them in her mantle, once more gathered it around her tall, thin person, and drew her cowl over her eyes.

"I adjure thee, meet not my vision in that shape. Go, if thou hast done thine errand," he cried, with a ghastly countenance, in which shame and indignation at what he had been compelled to do plainly struggled to vent themselves ; "leave me, and may the depths of hell receive thy horrid form."

"Thrice more I will visit thee, Knight of Osma, and my errand will then be done, vengeance appeased, and justice satisfied. Till then, remember in all thy acts of power that mine is greater than thine, and that this province, for the sake of one in it whom else thy lust and power might blight, hath a sleepless guardian."

Thus speaking, she gathered her flowing mantle about her limbs, and, with a commanding majesty of aspect and demeanour, stalked across the tent, lifted the hangings, and disappeared.

The count looked after her a moment, and then convulsively clinched his hands together, gnashed his

teeth, glared around with demoniac wildness, while rage and shame filled his soul. He seized the dagger which had fallen at his feet, and, shaking it aloft, struck it madly out in the air, where the sorceress had so lately stood, as if he would vent his impotent rage on empty space. The prostrate form of Sulem, who had fallen on his face in profoundest Oriental veneration of the departing sorceress, met his eyes, and he sent the weapon towards him with such force that it sunk into the ground beside him to the hilt.

"Get thee to thy feet, Leviathan!" he cried. "Art thou become a fool also? Thou deservest death in permitting this fiend to enter my tent. I will pour my thwarted vengeance on the false sentinels; so, speak for thyself."

"She is a dark woman, *cadi*!" he answered, with awe.

"Dost thou fear her?"

"Sulem is her slave."

"She is thy countrywoman, too?"

"She hath the Moorish tongue, *cadi*, and spoke words into my ear with it, when she would enter, that made my soul tremble. She is a dark woman!"

"What meanest thou?"

"She hath her seat in the sun, and her feet resting upon the sea. She knoweth the future as if it were the past, and the past hath no secret that she knows it not. The spirits of the dead are at her command, and the living become like dead men in the scorching glance of her eye. She commanded me, and I obeyed."

"And she commanded me too, and I obeyed," he repeated, fiercely, while his countenance gleamed with indignant anger. "I am levelled with my slave. By the cross of my knighthood, I will not live under it! This twenty-ninth of September! This accursed St. Michael's day! Wonderful and damnable is her knowledge! Not a secret of my soul but what she knoweth it. Sulem!" he cried, suddenly turning to

the Moor, who now stood before him in his usual attitude, with his arms folded across his breast.

"Cadi !"

"That sorceress must die !"

The Moor uttered a cry of supernatural terror, and fell prostrate at his feet, which he clasped imploringly.

"What means this, fool ?"

"The lightnings of Allah will consume to ashes the mortal that lifts hand against one like her."

"Out upon thee, superstitious idiot !" cried the count, though not himself free from the fears that filled the breast of the trembling Ethiopian. "*She must die !*" he added, slowly and determinately.

"She hath no life !" he said, with horror.

"No life ! She hath veins, and blood in them, and it must flow. Look well to thy cimeter's edge. If she live till the morning of St. Michael's day, thy head shall answer it. To thy post without my tent door. If but a shadow fall upon its threshold, I will send thee in chains to thy Moorish master. Ha, you shrink ! Go : I would be alone."

Left alone, the Count of Osma gave himself up to long and calm reflection upon the events that had transpired in his interview with the extraordinary being, who, by mere moral force, had subdued his haughty will and bent it to her purpose. At length he cast himself into his chair, and, summoning the captain of the guard before him, learned from him that a mysterious individual, such as the count now described to him, had been permitted to pass both to and from the pavilion on the faith of his signet, which had been exhibited to each of the posts in succession and recognised.

"It is thus far well," he said. "Henceforward, signor, obey no signet that is not backed by the counter-sign also. To your duty."

The officer then left the cabinet ; and, soon afterward, worn and wearied both in body and mind, the count threw himself upon his couch, and sought oblivion in sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

SCENE IN A QUADROONE'S BOUDOIR.

WHEN the beautiful Quadroone retired from the presence of her brother and the handsome young cavalier, she traversed the latticed and vine-shaded cloister of the square court, heedless of the floods of song poured from the throat of her favourite nightingale at her approach—of the flowers that scattered their dew-heavy leaves at her feet—of the moon shining on her skyey throne, turning the clouds to silver as they sailed beneath, and filling the court with its cold, chaste splendour—heedless of all save the remembrance of him whom she had just left. At the extremity of the corridor, opening outward, was a double Venetian door, dropped across the opening of which, on the inside, was visible a curtain of crimson silk, its colour receiving a richer tone from a lamp within. She placed her hand upon it, but, ere drawing it aside, lingered on the threshold in a listening attitude, as if she fain would once more distinguish the voice of the stranger, whose image filled her soul.

"Hist, Eglé! wilt thou not be quiet?" she said, angrily, to her mocking-bird, which at that instant alighted upon a vase near her, and made the whole air alive with melody.

Scarce had she spoken ere she felt she had betrayed her heart to herself, and surprised, alarmed at the knowledge of it, she bent her lovely head in confusion, and, lifting the curtain, disappeared within.

The apartment into which she entered was well fitted to receive so fair a mistress. It was a small boudoir, characterized throughout by the most exquisite taste. The floor was inlaid with mosaic in flowers and figures, as finished as a painting in fresco, and shining

with the lustre of polished marble. Over its mirror-like surface were strewn gorgeous mats of dyed Angola hair; the walls were hung with figured tapestry, and around them were ottomans and divans of the most luxurious description. In the furniture and architectural decorations, azure and purple, gold and silver, were called into service, and the softest and the most delicate colours seemed to have contributed to perfect the harmonious whole. In the midst of this elegance, which rivalled that of a cabinet of a fairy princess, were conspicuous the signs of the Christian faith. At one extremity of the toilet-chamber was a miniature altar of black marble. On it stood a small ivory crucifix, before which burned a silver lamp, the gentle rays from which emitted a soft radiance throughout the room, and diffused around a spicy aroma. Beyond the altar, in a recess, was a deep window looking towards the Place d'Armes, and towering above it, in the moonlight, appeared the white towers of the Cathedral, like gigantic guardians of the city. On the right of the altar the drapery was drawn aside, giving a glimpse within of a simple yet tasteful couch, hung around with snowy curtains—sleeping-room ante-room—and they both constituted the sacred home of the maiden. Here doubtless were passed her most retired hours and seasons of devotion. Here were her broidery frame, her harp, her lute, gilded volumes, and scrolls of music. Here, unsuspecting their real end, she pursued and perfected herself in those accomplishments, in which her guilty mother had taken pains to make her a proficient. Hither she fled from the oppression and vice of the judging and unfriendly world, in the forgetfulness of sleep no more to remember her sorrow; or, bowed down before the altar of her Redeemer, stay her heavy soul.

Within the last twenty-four hours she had found need of this consolation. The object of criminal love, she depended, in the confidence of her sisterly heart, on her brother's arm and fervent affection, and by faith on Him who could give that arm strength in the cause of

virtue, and make that affection a consuming fire to her oppressor.

Azèlie entered her boudoir with a flushed cheek, and, dropping the silken curtain again across the entrance, passionately cast herself upon her knees before the crucifix, and, putting back her dark hair from her beautiful face, clasped her hands upon the altar and laid her forehead upon them. For a few seconds she seemed like a statue, so motionless was every limb and fold of her vesture. She was struggling with a supernatural effort to keep down her newly-awakened love. But in vain. Her bosom began to heave violently, her breath came quick and convulsively, and her spirit seemed as if it would burst its tenement. Suddenly tears, blessed tears, came to her relief, and dropped upon the altar like rain, thick and fast. In a few moments afterward she lifted her dewy face heavenward, with a look of calm and divine resignation, such as Raphael loved to give his Madonnas, and her lips moved. There was no sound—yet she prayed.

She prays for protection and for mortal strength to the Virgin Mary, the protectress of virgins! Gentle Azèlie! There is a beautiful propriety in thy petition—thine is the poetry of religion! But One whom thou hast forgotten, whose dread name thy lips are forbidden to pronounce—One whom thou art taught by error to believe too high and august to regard human petitions—HE will hear thee, lovely child! HE will protect thee. Yet thou knowest not the extent of thy wretchedness, nor how much protection thou needest to pray for! Thou knowest not of the unjust and wicked claim of which thou art the victim! Thou knowest not that he whom thou fearest, from whose unhallowed passion thy pure soul shrinks, hath proclaimed thee his slave, and that the judges of the city gainsay it not!

She rose from the altar, and, seating herself by the trellised casement in the recess behind it, with her hand supporting her cheek, gazed vacantly forth. A garden filled with lemon, orange, citron, and other tropical fruit-bearing trees was beneath, or, rather, before her,

for the ground window opened outward into it. The heavens were deep and tranquil. Silence reigned over the city. Not a sound came from the deserted streets. The fragrant night breeze-fanned her brow and sported with her raven tresses, while the moon slept upon her pale forehead as if it had lain on marble. How exquisitely formed was the hand and arm that supported the head ! How full of grace her figure ! How beautiful the depth of the upturned eyes ! What sweetness in the line of her mouth, just parted as if to speak ! How eloquent with tender sorrow was all !

She directed her look to the skies, but her thoughts were not there. She was communing with her own heart, into which, unknown to her, love had stolen as she watched the pillow of the Spanish youth. She thought of his wondrous beauty and noble demeanour ! She recalled each feature, dwelt on every varying expression, and remembered his accents when he spoke to her brother. To herself he had not spoken, save with his eyes ; and they were so full of respectful tenderness—so impressive, yet so devoted—it seemed to her young heart the language of love—of honourable love, such as became a maiden to receive.

“Does he love me ?” she tremblingly asked of her heart.

That she loved him she could no longer disguise from herself. Like that sweet bud that unfolds its petals to the honey-bee only when the sun shines upon it, her young heart had expanded at the first glance of his dark eye, and admitted love.

“Does he love me ?” she asked of herself.

She trembled to answer. A deep sigh escaped her, and thought, busy thought, involved her in its mazes. Suddenly she started to her feet, as if some bitter reflection had stung her to the soul, and, with a wild laugh and flashing eye, cried, in the short, energetic tones of despair,

“Love me ! Ha, ha, ha ! Am I not a quadroone ? Yes, he *may* love me !” she added, with ironical bitterness ; “a quadroone is easily loved ! Ay, marry !

she hath lovers enough ! Thou art well punished, foolish maiden, for forgetting thy condition. That burning thought ! It is fire to my brain ! Crushed are all my bright visions ! wrecked my hopes ! *Love, Love !* The very word, so dear to a virgin heart, so pleasant to her ear, becomes a name of guilt on my lip !”

Her air, the indignant, ringing tones of her voice, and the vivacity of her manner, showed a spirit and dignity that were scarce to be looked for in one so gentle and feminine. But the awakened spirit of an insulted woman hath ever the lofty character of sublimity.

She walked her room with a rapid step for a few moments, then suddenly stood still, as if a flash of thought had checked her. Her voice was now more subdued, and hope beamed in her eyes.

“Nay, he was so noble, and his presence so gentle, and his eyes were so respectful ! If—yet he may not have known me to be one of the accursed race ! Men are not wont to look upon *us* as he looked on me ! I could have cast myself at his feet, for I felt he would have lifted me to his heart. Oh ! my poor heart ! Still thy throbbing ; for he whom thou art so wildly beating for will ne’er care for thee if thou break ! Ah me ! thou wilt be soon quiet enough in the grave.”

She sank upon an ottoman as she mournfully said this, and seemed lost in the bitterness of woe ! Poor Azélie ! Who will not pity thee ! Child of guilt, and daughter of infamy ! Notwithstanding thou hast lived amid all the fascinations of vice and the allurements of luxurious temptation ; notwithstanding thou hast been taught to believe beauty given to thee to ensnare, and that female purity hath its price ! that virtue is only a name, and honour as the idle wind ; notwithstanding thy mind has been poisoned by subtle morals, and thy soul perverted by the example and precept of an unnatural mother ; notwithstanding all of thy race, and the light-hearted maidens of thy youth, embrace dishonour, and blush not at what they know no wrong in, yet thou art innocent and pure ! Heaven

hath given thee a spotless spirit and a virtuous heart endowed thee with a lovely and gentle nature, yet firmness and pride of spirit that leadeth thee to prefer death to infamy, and the dark silence of the grave to the silken couch of illicit love !

She had remained in the drooping attitude into which she had sunk upon the divan, her soul full of gentle sadness, but a few minutes, when a door at the opposite extremity of her sleeping apartment opened, and a female, of the most majestic beauty of form, stately, but not tall, with an inconceivable grace in her step and carriage, entered, and drew back the curtains of the couch. With an exclamation of surprise at finding it unoccupied, she, with a quicker step, entered the room where sat Azèlie, too deeply busied in her own reflections to observe her presence. She was about thirty-five years of age, with an eye of the most voluptuous black, and depth of passion. Her complexion was of the richest brown of the ripe berry, warm, sunny, and glowing, and soft with all the delicacy of youth. The high, smooth forehead was a model for a queenly brow, notwithstanding the shadow of the olive, and not the bright light of the lily, rested there. Her brows were black as night, but pencilled to a hair in the most perfect arches ; while the eyes beneath !—they were orbs of soul, glorious, magnificent—languid, burning, and ardent in their glances, yet melting with tenderness : eyes dark and dangerous as they were beautiful ! The mouth was as dangerous as the eyes, for Love seemed there to have touched his arrows ere he shot them from the latter. Her nose was straight and finely shaped ; her lips cut as if with the chisel ; her chin of that faultless roundness and downy finish that will be remembered in beautiful woman, and which no pen may delineate. Her face was a fine oval, the contour of which the arrangement of her raven hair, parted on her forehead, as if for night costume, smoothly on each temple, contributed to preserve. Her form was enveloped in a *robe de chambre*, that displayed her superb bust, and small, ele-

gant waist, without altogether hiding the shape of an arm of matchless proportions; while beneath were visible a pair of very small feet, very hollow in the instep, of that pure model and exquisite delineation characteristic of the quadroone, of which, save at the ball of the heel and near the toe, no part touched the earth. The majestic breadth, yet symmetry of her shoulders and bust were extraordinarily contrasted by the smallness of her pliant waist, though in the perfect *tournure* of her whole figure the unity and harmony were complete. Altogether, hers were the face, foot, and figure of a quadroone, a race which, in form, limb, and action of the body, are models of the human species. She paused in surprise as she beheld the maiden, and the angry light of her eyes, which the long, heavy lid, and soft, sable fringes could not subdue, betrayed that, amid all that voluptuous langour, there slumbered a mine of passion, and that Hecate, as well as Cupid, held empire there.

"Azélie! girl, why art thou not on thy pillow? Is it that thou mayest now spoil thine eyes and cheek that I have been for years unfolding thy charms and instilling into thee the arts of loveliness? Up with thee, girl!"

At the first sound of her voice, the young Quadroone shrunk instinctively within herself; but the moment afterward she rose, and, with her hands folded upon her breast, stood submissively and patiently before her.

"What would you, *ma mère*?" she asked, seeing her mother fix her large full eye upon her, with the deliberative look of one who had not decided whether to pursue towards her a course of forbearance or sternness.

"Why art thou not in thy chamber?"

"Renault—"

"Renault! It is ever Renault! The stripling hath got to rule the household, by the Virgin!" she said, angrily. "What hath he done now?"

"He bade me watch by the wounded cavalier's couch, his duties carrying him abroad."

"And didst thou come from thence, when now I heard thy footstep and voice in the corridor, which brought me hither?" she demanded, almost fiercely pressing her arm with passionate force.

"I have, *ma mère*."

"Sleeps he yet?" she inquired, rapidly interrogating her.

"He hath awakened refreshed."

"Hast thou spoken to him?"

"Nay, *ma mère*!"

"Nor he to thee?"

"My brother came in and woke him, I believe," she answered, now remembering, with sudden surprise, that she herself had fallen asleep.

Her jealous mother saw the blush that mantled her face, and fixed her eyes upon her as if she would read her soul with a glance.

"Tell me truly," she asked again, with slow and terrific emphasis, "hath he spoken with thee?"

"No, *ma mère*."

"Nor thou to him?"

"No."

"Nor by sign nor look?" she demanded, more severely.

"Nay, mother."

She looked into the maiden's countenance an instant after she answered, and then, as if satisfied of her truth, said,

"'Tis well for him it is so. *He should have died.*"

Azèlie buried her face in her hands and was silent; but the words her mother had spoken were every one of them as a strong cord of mingled pity and resentment to bind the young Spaniard closer to her heart. Opposition, as it ever will, effectually secured to him one who would be his firm protector if she menaced him with danger. After watching her daughter's countenance for a moment, she said, in a more gentle tone,

"It is well for thee and him. Thou knowest a breath upon thy reputation would defeat my hopes of

thee. Thou shouldst remember that the honour of a quadroone, till she hath her protector, is sacred as a betrothed bride's. Thy brother Renault hath become too independent; he spurns my authority, and would control thee as if thou owed obedience nowhere else! Is he with the Spaniard?"

"I left him there, *ma mère*."

"See thou keep thy chamber while this stranger is here. Renault shall send him away ere the day end. Thou art too lovely a treasure, child, to be lightly guarded. One stain upon thy maiden honour, and the poorest bourgeois of the town would not accept thee. As thou art, a prince might kneel for thee."

"Mother, hear me!" said Azélie, with spirit. "The destiny you have in store for me shall never be mine. I would not share the unblessed couch of an emperor. Thou carest for my honour. Mockery, mockery, mother! Alas! thou knowest not the meaning of honour save that it is the price of dishonour. Since yesterday, light has broken in upon me. I will die, mother, ere I become the thing you would have me!" The spirit of her eye and brow bore testimony to her words.

"What means this, child?" demanded the quadroone-mother, with surprise; and then asked scornfully, "Would you be a wife?"

"I will never be a concubine," she replied with spirit, blushing crimson with shame, that her feelings should be so rudely tried.

"Ha! this young Spaniard hath done this!"

"I have done it."

"He hath offered terms to thee?"

"Never!" she cried, with indignation.

"Art thou mad? What is this that hath possessed thee?"

"Virtue."

"Virtue! ha! Yes, I have taken care that thou art virtuous, and that thou continue so till he who would wear thee hath paid the price of thy beauty. It is worth a princess's equipage, and shall win it for

thee. But calm thyself, my sweet child ; I have come to tell thee thou needest think no more, nor will I speak to thee more, of this Jules Caronde, whom thy obstinacy hath compelled to a course against me and thyself that he shall answer for. Does he think that by enslaving the mother, even for one hour, in order to possess the daughter, he shall succeed ? No ! This hand shall deprive both him of its object and thee of life at the same moment first."

"Thanks, thanks, *ma mère* !" she cried, embracing her.

"This obstinacy of thine hath turned to thy good fortune," she continued, returning with a caress the grateful expression of her feelings. "The claim he makes I have papers in my possession to defeat. But I can never forget that he has made it, and that before all men I and thou have been proclaimed slaves."

"Slaves, mother !"

"Caronde's slaves !"

Azèlie uttered a cry of despair, tottered, and would have fallen but for the support of her mother's arm, beside whom she sunk down almost insensible.

"Fear not, my child ! The instruments of manumission, signed and sealed by his father, are in my private cabinet, to be forthcoming if the crisis to call them forth should ever arrive. But I have learned that he has been carried to his fortress, heavily wounded, in the affray in the *Place d'Armes*, and may not live—which the saints grant ! Rise, child ; thou shalt never hear of him more from me, and I will forgive thy disobedience to my wishes, as he has not proved worthy of my choice or of thy gentle beauty."

She embraced her daughter as she spoke, who returned her unwonted kindness with a smile, brighter than for many days had lighted up her features. She then commanded her to retire, and kissed and bade her an affectionate good-night, saying, with a smile,

"I knew I should lighten thy heart, *enfant*, with my news. Caronde hath made himself basely unworthy of you, and thou shalt not hear, at least, *his* name again."

"Nor any name, I implore thee, *ma mère*. I will willingly die first."

"Nay, *ma chère*, we will not talk of that now; go to sleep, or thine eyes will be red and swollen with these late hours. The night air and burning oil are poison to beauty."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SORCERESS.

Thus speaking, the stately quadroone-mother left the apartment. The indignity offered to her by the solicitor of her daughter's person was not the only motive that influenced the change so agreeable to Azélie in her manner, who had wondered that she had betrayed no regret at her disappointment in the loss of the young marquis, on whom, for his wealth and rank, she had fixed as her vowless lord, and whose suit she had for several weeks encouraged with the exercise of all her authority. A noble mansion, a train of slaves, gorgeous equipages, and a style of appearance above all other quadroones in the province, were temptations, both to her pride and cupidity, that were not to be thought lightly of; for they confirmed her most sanguine hopes for Azélie, fulfilled the end of her jealous care and education, and constituted, in her opinion, the highest and happiest condition in which she could place her.

Such was the highest happiness sought or wished by the quadroone-mother for her daughter! Such was the fate to which each lovely daughter was destined—such the fruition of their maiden hopes. That she betrayed no regret, nor uttered a word of disappointment at resigning all these, but, on the contrary, was calm and more than usually gentle, surprised

Azèlie as she reflected upon it after her departure. There was, indeed, a deep yet concealed cause for this, which, for the present, the quadroone-mother kept secretly hidden in her own breast, but which, if known to the lovely girl, would have redoubled the weight of heaviness upon her spirits that her kind parting words had so magically removed. The secret intelligence and duplicity that marked her smile, and the proud hopes that elevated her air and step as she retired from the boudoir, were lost upon the daughter, who, happy in the relief the words conveyed, sought beyond them for no covert meaning.

Whatever the secret motive might be that reigned so supremely in the breast of the quadroone-mother as to leave no room for natural regret at the destruction of long-cherished hopes, it was, in, from her manner, that it was sufficient to make amends for her disappointment, and must be a high and commensurate cause to induce her so readily to permit her daughter to cease to think of Jules Caronde.

That she was no longer to speak to her on the subject she so sensitively shrunk from was not to be believed. Azèlie was still a *quadroone*! Her spirited protest had not been understood by the mother, who, like the Circassian parent, looked to this disposal of her daughter as a natural and suitable one. If her feelings were understood, they produced no impression upon her. As well might the mothers of Europe cease to regard the hymeneal welfare of their daughters, as the quadroone-mother to cease to look after the happiness and interests of a beautiful child. To her custom has made concubinage as honourable as marriage. There was, therefore, still another trial in store for Azèlie.

These reflections, however, scarcely flitted across her mind, and left no more permanent impression than the wing of the swallow upon the still lake. She thought only of her present happiness, and scarcely restrained herself from flying to her brother and communicating the intelligence. Once she thought of the

power of the fierce young marquis, and that it might be greater than her brother's, and she looked up to heaven, as if her hope was there, and became reassured.

She was now about to prepare for her late toilet, when the sonorous calls of the sentries throughout the city drew her to the lattice where she had before been seated. She listened to the answering cries, loud and prolonged, of "*All's well!*" at first with a startled ear, and then with a strange delight, as voice after voice broke the stillness and died away in the distance. She then cast a hasty glance at the quiet sky, with its heraldry of stars, and with the half-breathed wish of a child that she was there, far from the world's woes, was about to retire from the chilly night air, when a rustling in the branches of a tree before the lattice attracted her ear and eye. While in a half-flying attitude she endeavoured to penetrate the shadow into which the lower part of the tree was cast, a tall figure, wrapped from head to feet in a mantle, suddenly stepped forth from the obscurity, and, ere she could utter an exclamation either of terror or surprise, or fly from the casement, laid a hand upon her arm.

"Maiden, fear not—cry not out! I am thy friend, and am here to save and bless thee!"

The voice was gentle and kind, and was that of a woman. She repressed the cry of alarm that rose to her lips, and said with firmness,

"What would you with me?"

"I may not speak with thee here, without," she said, releasing her hold upon her arm; and, passing through the doorlike window, she entered the boudoir.

Azélie retreated to the centre of the room, and gazed upon her with emotions more of surprise and curiosity than of fear; for the singularly gentle and kind tones of her voice had instantly and surprisingly dispelled all anxiety for her own safety, even when she found herself alone with her.

"A gorgeous abode, gentle maiden," said the extraordinary intruder, looking round the rich apartment,

which was seen by the soft light diffused by the fragrant lamp. "It becomes thy birth; this is as it should be! Nay, drop not thy head! Thou thinkest I mock thee, and that there is irony in my words. Thou wilt one day learn, my Lalla, that I speak no riddles. 'Tis well," she added, surveying the sumptuous furniture and silken drapery; "'tis befitting thee! I would have it so. There is an altar! thou art a Christian, too! they have taught thee this faith! Whose is this crucifix?" she demanded, taking up the image.

"Mine, mother!"

"There is but one God, and Mohammed is his prophet," she repeated, in a deep, impressive voice.

"Surely I have heard those words before!" exclaimed Azèlie, starting with sudden recollection; "and thy form and voice are like an indistinct passage of a half-remembered dream of childhood."

"Bless thee, child!" said the woman, with a smile of pleasure, "thou hast not forgotten all! Memory hath been faithful to her trust. Let me kiss thy hand in token of my gratitude."

Ere she could withdraw it, she enthusiastically, and with a look and air of adoration, seized and pressed her lips upon it.

"Who art thou, strange woman?" demanded Azèlie, with increasing wonder.

"Thy guardian angel. One who will watch over thee for thy good; who will defeat the machinations of thine enemies, and secure thy happiness on earth. Dost thou know me?"

"No, mother!"

"Wilt thou believe and trust me?"

"I will," she said, earnestly; "for friends to the unfortunate are prized jewels not to be cast aside. The sound of thy voice wins me. I will believe thou seekest my good."

"It is enough. I knew it. I knew I should find thee of this spirit. Bless thee, child. Enemies are around thee. But I know thy virtue, and the guilty

persecutions and evil machinations of the wicked and beautiful woman who left thee but now. Fear her not. I have power over her that you know not of. Power to make her spirit tremble. One word from me will be a poisoned dagger to her heart. Thy trials are not yet over. I foresee danger to thee in the future. It is even close at hand. But fear not! I, who foresee the evil, can see the remedy. Trust to me, and thou shalt be triumphant. The trial is less for thee than for the retribution of one who, ere the morrow's sun, will have sought thee out and found thee; for the fame of thy beauty hath reached him."

"Save me, I beseech thee, mother! Thy foreboding words are death!" she cried, supplicating her with clasped hands.

"Nay, in thy utmost peril, lay not a hand upon thy life! Here is a token of my truth. Take it and wear it. It will ever command my power and presence! When thou art in thy greatest extremity, use it."

She took from her neck a small hollow circlet of gold, on which were inscribed some Arabic verses, surrounding an amethyst of singular shape, in the centre of which was graven a mysterious sign, and placed it around her neck.

"Now, child of my heart, thou art under my protection, and that of the good spirits. No harm shall attend thee, though the danger that hangs over thee will be great and imminent." She then placed her hand upon her head, and, looking upon her pale but beauteous face, said, as if unconscious of speaking aloud,

"There is the brow and eye of the mother—the firm and beautiful lip of the sire. Maiden, thou art very fair. There is no wonder that thy beauty hath been, even as thy mother's was, a bane to thee! But thy mother's fate shall not be thine."

"Bless thee, bless thee for that word!" cried Azélie, gratefully.

"Dost thou know of whom I speak? Nay, thou

canst not; nor neither shall the quadroon's fate be thine, gentle Lalla."

"Why call me Lalla, good mother?"

"It is thy name."

"Nay, Azélie."

"Be it so. Thou art Lalla to me. Adieu. I have watched thee many a night when thou knewest it not. The hawk hath now slipped its jess, and it becomes the keeper of singing birds to be present and watchful. Therefore have I come hither now to put thee on thy guard, and bid thee hope. I would have thee know me too. See that no one, not even thy brother, knoweth of our interview! Is he abroad still?"

"He is with a Spanish cavalier who has been wounded—"

"And is beneath this roof. He hath done well. How fares the stranger, maiden?"

"He hath slept," she answered, quickly.

"He will be better, then. Guard thy heart, for speech of him, I perceive, is already a talisman to call the blood to thy brow."

"Is he not worthy?" she asked, earnestly.

"If thy beauty and gentleness can win him, he is worthy to win and wear even *thee*," she said, with a smile that made even her dark countenance pleasing. "Now, good-night. I must go and make a visit of a sterner kind to a warrior, and not to a maiden;" and, once more kissing the hand of the surprised Azélie, she hastily passed through the window, and vanished amid the foliage.

While the bewildered Azélie, to whom this brief visit had been like a dream, still stood on the spot where the sorceress had parted from her, gazing after her dark, tall form, and wondering in her mind at the event, a light touch was laid upon her shoulder, and, looking round, she beheld standing behind her her brother, who that moment had taken his leave of the young Spaniard.

"I heard a voice besides thine, sister; and this eager

attitude I find thee in, with thy gaze towards the garden! Ha! there is no wind to move yonder acacia!" he cried, darting past her.

"Stay, brother, stay!" she cried, holding him by the hand ere he could break from her.

"Thou hast not been alone, then," he said, obeying, and eying her with a look of inquiry; "I know you too well," he added, with the tone of confidence due to her truth and love, "to believe there has been anything wrong, whoever hath been with thee. It is enough for me that you wish the intruder to escape."

"Dearest Renault, I should die to labour under your suspicions. Your generosity weighs more with me than the command I received to keep her presence a secret. Moreover, thou thyself hast discovered it."

"It is but a woman, then?"

"A woman, indeed, but one whose voice and words had strange power over me," she said, in an impassioned tone.

"Was she not known to thee?" he asked, in surprise.

"No, brother; yet with early memories her tall figure is strangely mingled."

"*Talk!* Ha! this chimes! Wore she a gray mantle that descended to the ground?" he eagerly demanded of her.

"You have seen her, then, Renault!"

"I must believe that I have, and that it is the same who bade me succour the Spanish cavalier. Spoke she of this wounded stranger?"

"She did, and commended you for bringing him hither."

"It is the same. What will come of it all? It is mysterious. What interest can she have in thee? What was the matter and manner of her visit?"

In a few words she related to him all that had transpired, not omitting the interview with her mother, and then watched earnestly the expression his thoughtful face assumed after she had ended.

The maturer mind of Renault was deeply impressed
VOL. I.—O

by her narration. He judged and weighed together corresponding facts without the medium of passion. He took a calm and rational survey of what had been said and done at both interviews. The result was, he arrived at the just and certain conclusion that his mother had laid some deep and dangerous plot for the sacrifice of his sister, and that it was discovered by this singular woman, who had warned her against it. Who could she be, or why she should take such an interest in his sister, he was unable to divine. He did not communicate his opinions to Azèlie, but internally resolved to discover the conspiracy, if such there was, ere it should ripen, and, in the mean while, watch over her safety against enemies, within and without, with double diligence.

"What think you, brother?" she asked, seeing him so long silent and thoughtful.

"That Heaven hath given thee another protector besides thy brother. I came hither to bid thee good-night, and pray thee to keep within till my return at noon. Walk not even in the garden, nor abroad, save at mass. Nay, this barricade must be dropped."

As he spoke he touched a bar, and a framework of iron slid from the wall, and, catching in the opposite side of the window, presented a firm barrier to egress or ingress. "Thou wert careless, child, to leave this open, knowing your danger from Caronde and his minions. This visit of the sorceress, as thou callest her, is a warning to thee! What said she of our mother? was it not that she had power over her?"

"That would make her tremble!"

"Ah! this knowledge may be of use to me. I will bear it in mind. Now good-night, dearest. Haste to thy couch, and in the morning see that our guest is well entertained, even as his need and wounded state shall require."

"Is he better?"

"Not so well. Let him be kept quiet."

Thus speaking, he affectionately took leave of his sister, and departed by the door leading to his moth-

er's apartments. Azèlie, soon afterward retiring to her chamber, took up her mandoline, and, accompanying it with her voice, created that flood of melody which fell on the ravished ears of the cavalier, and lulled his senses into sweet and calm repose. In a few minutes afterward she herself was asleep, and dreaming that she was watching by the pillow where she had left her heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCENE BETWEEN THE QUADROONE-MOTHER AND HER SON.

RENAULT closed the door behind him, and, crossing a small paved hall, tapped lightly at a half-open door on the opposite side.

"Come in, Renault," said the richly-toned voice of his mother.

He entered a sumptuous chamber, characterized by luxury and voluptuous ease, and found his mother reclining on one of those elegant open couches so much in use in tropical countries. She half rose to receive him with an indolent, indifferent air, in which coldness rather than affection was predominant.

"What have you come for, Renault?" she asked, without looking upon him.

"My beloved sister's happiness," he said, firmly.

"You are ever a marplot, boy," she said, quickly, fixing upon him an angry glance.

"Azèlie shall never submit to the fate of her race. She is too lovely and pure. She has all the virtues of a wife, and none of the vices of a mistress. Ere she shall be one, I will kill her with my own hand."

"Thou wouldst be a fratricide to save thy sister's honour! Azèlie is a quadroone, and must fulfil her destiny. Surely there is nothing degrading to her.

She has all the luxuries and privileges of a wife, without its obedience and slavish duties. I would rather be thy father's concubine than his wedded wife. This silly notion and sickly sentiment that has possessed thee, boy, and with which the girl has gone mad, will ne'er make her a bride. The law has forbidden her marriage with a cavalier and gentleman, and she shall never wed with a quadroon."

"It were more honourable to be the wife of a slave than to be the mistress of a prince."

"This is high language. Dost thou forget that thou art a quadroon, and that thy sister is one also?"

"Dishonour in a quadroone is no less dishonour."

"Has not the very law that has forbidden honourable marriage legalized its substitute, boy, and made it honourable? If we are forbidden to marry, there is no guilt in all that we have left to us—wedlock without priest."

"I cannot reason with thee, mother. Education—thy own life—all that thou seest around thee, strengthen thee in thy singular opinion. I have thought that female virtue in a daughter was dear to a mother."

"So it is; and it is therefore that we provide for our daughters, whom we cannot wed to whom we would, suitable protectors."

"Paramours, you should have said. But this, you say, is not true, mother. Quadroones may wed with quadroons; though so differently are our men educated, that I must allow with sorrow that the union would be unequal. Cease to educate your daughters as baits to criminal passion, and their conditions will be less unequal. It is your pride, your love of display and finery, your female ambition and envious desire to surpass wives and honourable mothers, ay, to rob them of the honourable love which is justly their due; to share favours which are not thine own, but belong to those whose title and claim to them is more sacred than thine! Seek not to cast the blame upon others; the fault lies in thee, and the secret of it is guilty ambition, that, to attain its end, has degraded female vir-

ture to an article of merchandise, till our sisters are become a proverb and a by-word."

While the indignant youth was speaking, she fixed her large eyes upon his excited countenance with surprise, which, as he ceased, changed to anger.

"Slave, thou hast sealed thy fate, and that of her thou hast dared to teach rebellion."

"Ha! what mean you by this dark threat?" he cried, alarmed at the malicious energy of her voice and manner more than by the words.

"I hold in my hands the papers of my manumission, which the marquis gave me and forgot to record."

"Then hath Heaven preserved them to prevent the commission of a blacker crime than earth hath ever witnessed. But that cold, dark eye tells me thou hast not told me this for any good. Out with thy wickedness."

"Azèlie, as I have this night told her, shall never more be troubled with thy brother's suit. I have higher game than even he!"

"I knew it, and came here to find it out," he exclaimed.

"Knew it!" she repeated, with amazement; "how knew you it?"

"By knowing *thee*!" he replied, in a tone and manner that caused her to change colour, and for an instant shake her foot, that rested on an ottoman by her couch, with a rapid and nervous motion. "I knew," he added, observing the effects of his words, "that thou wouldst never give up an end which thou hast had so near to thy heart as this sale of Azèlie to the Marquis of Caronde, unless thou hadst a full equivalent for him."

She smiled meaningly, and then said, in a slow, deliberate tone of voice, "I have done with Jules; he shall never be master nor protector to your sister; who will be, I shall not mention. But mark me, if you step between her and me in my future plans for her happiness and best interests, I will place the pa-

pers of my manumission in the hands of the Spanish governor Osmá, and enslave her to him."

"And thyself—"

"I care not for myself, so that I punish her pride and have my revenge of thee."

"Thou art an incarnate fiend if thou didst give me birth—if thou didst—for methinks thou shouldst have been my brother Jules's mother."

"Ah! what is this thou sayest?" she cried, quickly, following him with her eyes as he strode across the room, spurred by his excited feelings. But, instantly seeing that he spoke at random, and meant no more than he said, she recovered her composure; for her face had flushed, and she had half risen to her feet at his insinuation.

"*Dare* to do this thing, woman!" he said, returning to her and almost whispering, so deep was his voice, which seemed to issue from his soul.

She quailed before his piercing eye and menacing tones, yet her spirit was not less firm than his.

"I will do it, if thou come between me and thy sister."

"Azèlie shall become the bride of Death ere she shall live in guilt," he replied, resolutely.

"If she becomes a slave, thou mayst thank thy fraternal care and *love*!"

"Thou art my mother, and I may not use violence towards thee, as I am tempted to do, to get possession of those papers. But, I repeat, beware how thou makest use of them!"

"Beware how thou thwart my plans!" she responded, in the same tone.

For a few moments Renault stood lost in thought. All at once a change came over his countenance, as if hope had been suddenly revived. With a careless air, and assuming the indolent action of his mother, he cast himself upon an ottoman beside the couch, and said, with a light laugh,

"Well, well, *ma mère*! have it thy own way."

She gave him her soft, elegant hand, the fingers of

which glittered with diamonds, and said with a smile, which came like a flash of sunlight on her face—for lightning is scarce quicker than the changes of passion in the quadroone—

"You have done well, Renault. It is for the child's happiness and thy own that she be well cared for. You are armed, I perceive, and look as if you were about to ride. Attend to thy own affairs, Renault, abroad, and leave Azèlie to me. Thou wilt not repent it!"

"Maybe not—maybe not! This is a rare jewel on thy little finger," he added, as if for the first time struck with its beauty; "doubtless a gift from my father."

"It was, Renault. Ah, the good, dear marquis! He never thought I could be happy unless loaded with diamonds! Azèlie, I wish she could do as well; she has beauty enough."

"Never mind Azèlie, mother. This turquoise—was that given thee by my father?"

"It was a gift from him the day Jules was born."

"Jules! 'tis strange!" he said, with surprise.

"No, no—thymself I meant."

The youth fixed upon her a glance of inquiry, and then resumed his careless toying with her jewelled hand.

"*Ma mère*," he said, in a natural tone, though the expression of his eye, as he rested it upon her face, betrayed a deep purpose beneath his careless manner, "do you believe in dreams?"

"I used to in childhood."

"Thou dost not now?"

"No. They are idle nothings."

"Dost thou dream now?"

"Seldom, save in fever."

"Never of the sheeted dead?"

"No, boy. What mean you?" she asked, turning pale.

"Nothing; I did but ask you. I had a dream last night."

"Dost thou believe in them?"

"Sometimes."

"What are dreams, boy?"

"Dreams, some think, are of Heaven. I have also thought so. But I can understand them now. Thou hast doubtless observed that conscience sleeps in dreaming."

"Conscience!"

"Nay, I meant nothing. 'Tis so. Conscience sleeps in dreams. The moral sense is then wanting. Then we do commit the blackest crimes, nor think it wrong."

"Crimes!"

"Nay, I meant nothing. We do bathe our hands in innocent blood in dreams, and nothing teaches us 'tis wrong. Conscience — moral sense — that divine something which, when waking, accuses or condemns our acts, is then silent. 'Tis strange, but 'tis so. I have thought we act in dreams as brute beasts act — with intelligence, but without reason. And that, waking, we should by nature be and act the same way but for that *divine light*. This light sets like the sun in sleep, and leaves the soul to its unillumined native darkness. There are, *ma mère*," he continued, in an indifferent tone, "human beings in whom this light hath not shone when awake. Such persons, awake, act as if they dreamed, so far as conscience hath its play. Crimes to them leave no compunction. Thou hast heard of such, doubtless."

The hand he held trembled in his, and the eyes of his mother furtively sought his immoveable countenance.

"Thou didst not answer. It matters not: such persons have lived as I speak of. Christ pity them, and save them from wo; for death will wake them up, and give to them back their consciences, armed with a thousand stings."

"Of whom speakest thou, Renault?" she faintly asked, pale with some inward emotion she sought to overcome and conceal.

"Nay, I have tired thee: I will relate the dream I had last night. Methought I slept within a bower in

the garden, when I was awakened by a voice, which said,

"'Renault, dost thou love thy sister?'

"'Dearly as life,' I answered.

"'She is in danger,' said the voice, which was like that of a female.

"'I will defend her with my life,' I replied."

"What said the voice?" asked his mother, eagerly.

"'Thou wilt, unaided, be overcome,' said the voice; 'thy power is human, and thy enemies stronger than thou. If thou wilt save her, go to thy mother, and say to her that the Fates have marked the day of her death!'

"'Is the secret with thee?' I asked of the voice.

"'It is with her. It is the day on which she does with thy sister as she has meditated.'"

"What said she farther?" asked the Quadroone, with a contemptuous smile of incredulity; "did she not bid thee turn seer for thy wisdom, and prophesy in silly women's ears? Out! Renault! This mockery is too contemptible."

"I saw her!" he said, solemnly, and meeting her eyes with a searching look.

"It was courteous in the mysterious speaker to appear, after amusing you so long unseen," she said, striving to laugh, but with ill success; for in the ghastly smile that distorted her features she betrayed herself to be a guilty woman, and was in her soul trembling at the anticipated revelation of some secret crime.

"She was tall, very tall," he said, without appearing to observe her emotion, although keenly watching every motion of the least muscle of her face; "and she wore a long gray mantle, that covered her from her eyes to the feet."

As he said this, his eyes seemed as if they would pierce her soul. Instead of betraying the feelings he had anticipated, he scarcely knew why, she seemed suddenly relieved by the description, and breathed freely; for she had ceased respiring to hang upon the words as they fell from him, as if she feared some dreaded result.

"Ha! ha! ha!" she laughed; "thou hast made a pleasant tale of it."

This did not escape him, but he was not to be defeated. He was now more confident than before that there was some secret, the discovery of which would give him the key to her will; and he was fully impressed with the conviction that the extraordinary being who had visited his sister in her boudoir was connected with it. He therefore betrayed no disappointment, but, in the same tone of indolent indifference in which he had detailed to her his readily-invented dream, continued,

"Her accent was foreign, which I thought odd in an apparition."

"Was it Moorish?" she asked, with a rapidity that surprised him.

"Nay, I am not skilled in dialects, but methinks 'twas something so; her face was dark brown, like a Moor's; and I noticed—"

"Well—" and she caught him nervously by the arm, and, looking with wild inquiry in his face, cried, "thou wouldst add something more—"

"And, now that I remember," he added, with a coolness that ill concealed his anticipated triumph, "beneath her mantle she wore the dress of a necromanceress."

The Quadroone uttered a wild shriek, and, burying her face in the pillow, her whole frame became convulsed—with what feeling, whether of terror, of rage, or of despair, or all three united, Renault could not tell. But, alarmed at the violence of the paroxysm, and almost repenting the course he had taken to possess himself of the secret of the stranger's power over her, which he had now proved to exist, he was about to confess his stratagem, and leave what he wished developed to the future, when she rose to her feet without assistance, but with the pallor of death in her face.

"My mother, forgive me," he cried, casting himself at her feet, overcome by the woe and anguish of her looks.

"Nay, Renault, thou art not to blame; Heaven-hath done this thing. Be it as thou wilt with Azèlie. I shall soon be beyond all earthly desires and human ambition. Go: leave me, I would be alone."

"Not so: I will remain with thee till thou art better," he said, tenderly, and bitterly condemning himself, while he wondered at the power of the strange being who could produce such an effect upon the human mind as he was now a witness to.

"No, Renault, I would be alone," she said, firmly.

"Wilt thou not embrace me, mother?"

She returned his filial kiss mechanically, and then waved her hand commandingly for him to depart. With his mind filled with wonder and his heart with grief at the effect his words had produced, he obeyed. Her eyes followed him until he had disappeared by a door opening upon the corridor. She then bent her ear, and listened till the last echo of his footfall ceased; till she heard the sound of the closing gate of the mansion, and until the receding hoofs of his rapid steed, as he galloped away, could no longer be heard. Then clasping together her jewelled fingers, with a face on which fear and remorse were stamped, cried fervently,

"This hath been Heaven's judgment. My doom is sealed. The terrible threat, pronounced twelve long years ago, now rings in my ears like my death-knell. Yet the sacrifice has not been made; Azèlie is yet free and spotless! So shall my punishment be lighter. My ambition and pride have endangered my soul! Ah! 'tis strange, all! Do the dead come back again? Do they, invisible to us, hold watch and ward over the innocent they loved on earth? This is terrible to think of, when I remember of what I am guilty! My soul shrinks," she said, fearfully, closing her eyes with a shudder, "lest her sudden presence from the world of spirits should confound me! 'Tis wonderful! Yet my guilt is not consummated; Heaven hath stepped between my ambition and her innocence ere it had been too late! and Renault hath been its instrument! Doth he know, doth he suspect? Nay, it cannot be; he would not have embraced me at parting!"

She continued to reflect, now calmly, now with excitement, upon the events related, and at length began to weigh in her mind, as the impressions were gradually weakened by the scale of probability, the circumstances of Renault's relation. As she remembered he said it was a dream, her fears strangely lessened; and the supernatural influence that at first so vividly affected her sensibility, lost its power, till finally she was ready to attribute the whole to one of those unaccountable contingencies of place, time, and events, which occasionally occur, as if to bewilder the human mind; or, thought she, Renault, by some intelligible means unknown to her, might have acquired a knowledge of some mysterious connexion between her and a sorceress (which it was now plain there had been), and made use of it to accomplish his own ends by the influence it would probably have over her.

Arguments are never wanting when the mind would strengthen itself against its own fears. Renault had not been absent half an hour, before nearly every trace of the emotions he had awakened had subsided, though they were not wholly eradicated. There yet remained sufficient traces of superstitious fear to ensure, at least for the present, the fulfilment of her promise to him, that Azélie should be subject to his control. But the event will show that even this lingering influence became too weak to restrain her when tempted by her long-cherished interests and aspiring ambition, and that in moral as well as in spiritual things, the heart backslides when the present fear that moves it is no longer apparent to the senses.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCENE BETWEEN GOBIN AND THE TRUMPETER.

WHEN Renault left the presence of his mother, he traversed, with a hasty step, the corridor to the broad portal which led from the street to the inner court. As he approached the passage, his horse, which stood in a recess beside the closed gates ready saddled, neighed a recognition of his approach, and pawed the paved floor with impatient hoofs. An old slave at the same time came forth from the lodge on the opposite side, and, taking the animal by the head, led him out into the arched passage, which was dimly illuminated by a small lamp placed in a niche above the door.

"Has it struck one yet, Paul?" he asked of the aged porter, as he received the rein from his hand, and lightly leaped into the high-peaked saddle.

"It will 'fore you get to 'um barrier, young Mas' Renault. These is troublous times," he added, shaking his head, as if wishing to exchange opinions with his master on the recent events, "when poor old African, in his gray head, hab serbe de Spanis' king. I nebber 'spec to come to dis!"

"Keep to the lodge, good Paul," he said, smiling, "and thou wilt scarce know the change till thou be called to serve a greater king than he of France or Spain. Take thy keys from thy belt, and let me forth. Thou keepest all well and secure. 'Tis right, when citizens' houses are stormed by ruffians in broad noon."

"They made good four hours' work for the smith I sent for," said the old man, angrily; "and the iron bar of the door is bent like a Comanche's bow. But I have had all made strong again, as you bade me, Mas' Renault," concluded Paul, as he unlocked the tall folding gates of oak. But before removing the bar,

he threw open a little square window in the gate, and looked out, with the cautious scrutiny of a practised doorkeeper.

"All is still in the street, Mas' Renault," he said, closing the window, and opening one half of the gate ; for this, like all other entrances in the houses of the creoles, was a *porte cochère*, constructed to admit *volantes*, the only carriage then in use, to pass from the street into the quadrangle, around which were situated the apartments of the mansion.

"Thou seest our new rulers keep a quiet town, nevertheless," said Renault, as he tightened the rein, and settled himself firmly in his saddle ; "I shall return in a few hours. Let not the bolt be drawn, after thou hast turned it behind me, for *any one* during my absence, save to let thy mistress to mass, as thou valuest thy head," he added, with impressive authority ; thus plainly showing that it was his intention to hold the young Spanish cavalier in another light than that of a guest—as a prisoner. For such was the crisis of affairs in the birth of a new dynasty, that it became the foiled party to cling for protection to whatever held out the prospect of being made available for personal safety in the moment of personal danger.

Drawing his sword and laying it across his saddle-bow, Renault then struck his spurs into the horse's sides, and bounded through the dark arch into the moonlit street just as the clock in the Cathedral tower tolled one.

"I am full tardy ! thou must make up for it, Baptiste," he cried to his steed, patting his arched neck ; then glancing an instant to the head of the street which issued into the Place d'Armes, where he could plainly descry the dark body of bivouacked troops, relieved by the glistening arms as they caught and flashed back the moonbeams, he added, in a half tone, "There slumbers, like a tiger in his lair, our new master. I will to-morrow look on this Osma, and see if he be worthy to govern us ; if so, he shall have my allegiance and that of my friends. The ever-active

villany of Caronde needeth some offset, and I will be a sleuth hound upon his slimy track."

Thus speaking, he gave rein to his horse, and galloped down the long, narrow street towards a barrier at its extremity. The windows of the dwellings were all barricaded and dark, and his horse's hoofs alone broke the profound stillness that reigned. He rode on, without checking his speed, until he approached the barrier, before the gate of which a sentinel was pacing to and fro. When within a hundred yards of him, and near a narrow avenue that led between a double row of dilapidated old *casas*, with the gloomy and deserted government-house at its extremity, he reined up, and seemed to be deliberating whether to continue on to the gate, or turn aside into the dark lane.

"*Quien là!*" challenged the sentinel from the barrier, in a stern tone, ringing his arquebuss on the pavement. At the same instant an officer and several soldiers issued from the guardhouse and formed in a hostile attitude, while a tall, dark figure was seen to glide from the shadow of the barrier along the low wall, and disappear behind an angle of the buttress. It instantly occurred to him that the form and height resembled that of the mysterious being who had commanded him to fly to the aid of the Spanish cavaliers, and who afterward had been seen by Azèlie. Prompted by the impulse of the moment, he instantly turned his horse's head to pursue her.

"*Quien là!*" repeated the soldier, still more sternly; and, although Renault saw that the muzzles of a dozen muskets were ready to cover his body, he rode on in the direction the figure had taken.

"*Quien là!*" was loudly shouted a third time; and the rattling of the muskets, as they were brought to the shoulder, reached his ear. He turned back in time to anticipate the word fire, which in the next instant would have been given by the officer, and responded,

"*Amigo.*"

"Advance, and give the countersign!"

He galloped up to the post, touched his bonnet, and saluted the captain of the guard in Spanish as courteously as his impatient feelings would allow him to do.

"*Buenos noches, señor !* you are vigilant."

"*Servidor, señor !*" returned the Spaniard, with dignified courtesy, but not without the tone of suspicion.

"The countersign, signor, if it please you?"

"Who was the person that just left the post as I came up?"

"The countersign, signor?" repeated the officer, decidedly.

"Orleans and Spain."

"*Bien ! Past.*"

"Nay, who left the barrier but now?"

"Whether man or woman, I know not. 'Tis a singular messenger the captain-general has chosen to send with a countermand of an order he had given out an hour ago, to fire the town at dawn. A word or two caught my eyes in the folds, and I opened it against orders and learned this!"

"Surely such an order was never given out?"

"I received mine as captain of the posts on this side of the city not half an hour since, and now this tall, gray page of his excellency hath left this countermand." He handed to him, as he spoke, one of the orders written by the Moor.

"Then Osma hath a devil's nature in him!" he exclaimed, in creole French, as he perused the evidence of such a sanguinary command having been issued by the new governor, though afterward countermanded. "If this figure was *hers*," he said to himself, "she hath been the instrument of this change of mind in him! She hath saved the city, or I have no knowledge. Nay, close the gate; I will not go forth now. Adieu, signor!" he cried, and galloped onward in the direction he had seen the figure vanish from his sight.

He rode a few moments rapidly along the street that was bounded by the wall, and issued in an open space among ruins and ravines, through which there was no passage for a man on horseback, without discerning

any trace of the object of his pursuit, though, from the rate at which he had ridden, he must have overtaken any not absolutely running at the top of their speed. He leaped from his horse, and, leaving him beside what appeared to be an uninhabited hovel of stones on the verge of the ruins, clambered over the broken walls and descended into the ravine, in the shadow of which he thought he descried a moving object. He was not deceived; for an instant afterward he beheld the same tall, gray figure leave the outlet of the *bayou* some distance from him, and proceed across a desolate place, bordered with a few scattered houses of the meanest description, and take her course with swift but equal strides towards the south barrier of the city.

Without hesitation he descended the ravine, rapidly following it to its source, and issued on the level space beyond; but he here again lost the figure in a clump of India-trees that shaded the guardhouse on the opposite side. He crossed the place at a rapid pace, and in a few moments came upon the barrier.

"*Qu'en là ?*" cried the startled sentinel, bringing his arquebuss to his shoulder, and cocking it.

"Camarada," he replied, advancing.

"The countersign?"

"Orleans and Spain."

"*Pasé.*"

"Who crossed your post just now?" eagerly demanded Renault of the sergeant of the guard, who came forth with a paper in his hand.

"The devil, I believe; and left this countermanding order from the general."

"You are at the barrier early, sir."

"Draw no bolt, soldier, I do not go forth," said Renault, seeing him preparing to let him out. "Which way went the governor's messenger?" he asked.

"Three fathoms at a step towards the east," answered the sergeant, with a laugh.

"*Gracias, señor !*" returned Renault, and flew forward in the direction indicated.

Twice he thought he saw the dim outline of a hu-

man form gliding beneath the grove of Pride of India trees that was before him, and he followed it like the wind. But, on reaching the spot, all was silent, and the seemingly illusive object of his pursuit as far from him as before. At length he came to the head of the Rue Ursuline, down which, from the nature of the ground, the pursued must have turned, and which, for two squares, lay exposed to the moonlight; but all was motionless. Not an object was visible in the whole range of his vision. He was about to turn back, and give up the vain pursuit in despair, when he heard close to his ear the same voice that arrested his steps as he was returning the previous evening from the council-chamber.

"What seek you?" was the stern demand.

His blood retreated to his heart with the suddenness of surprise rather than of fear, to which his bold spirit was a stranger; and, looking round, he beheld, standing within three feet of him, the tall, gray-hooded figure which, not only from motives of curiosity, but of intense personal feeling, he had been for the last ten minutes so eagerly pursuing.

"What seekest thou?" was repeated, in a voice of angry reproof.

"Thyself," he answered, firmly; though he drew back a step from the gaze of eyes that, from within the shadow of a cowl, shone as did those that rested on him.

"What wouldst thou have of me?"

"I would know who thou art, and wherefore thou takest an interest in my sister."

"Thou wilt know when the time is ripe for the knowledge, not only of this, but of what else thou desirest to learn of me."

"Thou meanest the secret of thy wonderful power over my mother?" he said, interrogatively.

"Thou shalt know all when next we meet."

"When shall this be?"

"Seek not to know, and beware that my path be not a second time chosen for thine! Thy steed awaits

thy return! Go! thy companions expect thee. Haste! there is no time for thee to idle away in vain curiosity, to learn what is not yet for thee to know. To thy rendezvous; and beware how thou dost lead those under thee to give their allegiance to Spain, and beware how thou tenderest thine own. There will be employment yet for thee and a thousand spirits like thine in thy country's cause! Remember and beware!"

Thus speaking, the sorceress strode past him; and, entering a narrow defile between the convent and a street wall he had not before observed, and from which she had so suddenly appeared before him, was in a few seconds lost to his eye in the black shadow cast by the building.

He lingered a moment on the spot where she had left him, and then, with his mind full of wonder, began to retrace his devious way to the spot where he had left his horse. In the mean while, this animal became the object of the attention of two worthies who have before made their appearance on the scene, with more or less credit to themselves.

In the hovel, by the side of which Renault had hastily secured his horse, and which, if he gave it a thought, he supposed to be uninhabited, so rudely was it constructed of the fragments of the edifice over which he had climbed, were seated, when he dismounted in pursuit of the gray figure, no less personages than Gobin the First and his new friend and ally Boviedo, the disgraced and unhorsed trumpeter of the captain-general's guard. The room in which they were seated was scantily furnished with a dislocated chair having a leathern bottom, on which Gobin himself sat gravely smoking a cigarillo; a low bench with a high-back, filled by the paunchy bulk of Boviedo, and a slenderly supported table, on which stood a green bloated bottle half filled with a muddy claret, which was represented by the purple contents of a brace of tumblers that stood beside it, and which had just been placed there by these bibulous brothers. From their appearance, as well as from that of the

bottle before them, they had been passing the hours that had elapsed since their acquaintance commenced in a way that reflected credit upon the hospitality of Gobin, who, from the aspect of things, and the glimpse of an old woman asleep in a low cot in an adjoining room, was in his own castle. They had been conversing upon the new occupation of the province, in the course of which Gobin had given utterance to much of the witless wisdom peculiar to him, which must be lost to every ear but that of the edified trumpeter. Wine and wassail had made the two fast friends.

"What is thine office now, great governor that was?" asked the trumpeter, blinking and hiccoughing with the wine he had drunk, and pursuing the amicable conversation with which they had mutually entertained each other.

"Call me not governor now, gossip! for a title without power is like learning without wisdom; it is the bells that hang to a fool's cap, which without them were a cardinal's. Call me *gossip*."

"Gossip Gobin, then, what may be thine occupation and calling?"

"I am a cavalier on the town—a promiscuous gentleman," answered Gobin, emptying his cup of muddy claret with an air.

"Hast thou consideration with any honest caballero?"

"Caballero! that is Spanish! Translate me, gossip. Give us the rendering o' it."

"It meaneth partly a horse and partly a gentleman," answered Boviedo, with a learned philological look.

"An amphibulous?" asked, or, rather, assented Gobin.

"Not an amphibulous, gossip. Caballo is for horse, and caballero for cavalier!"

"Is *ero* Spanish for gentleman?"

"Nay, gossip, caballero is."

"Then a Spanish cavalier is half orse. Wert

thou a cavalier, gossip, thou wouldst not need to search for another war-steed."

The fat trumpeter rubbed his forefinger across his obese forehead a few times, as if endeavouring to disentangle the dilemma; but, finding it in vain with his narrow compass of brains, he shook his thick head, and again put his question as to Gobin's calling.

"As to my calling, I am called Gobin the fool; and by some, the fool Gobin," replied the jester, winking within himself. "My occupation is as folly is in demand and men's wit at discount; I daily served the old governor with my counsel when he ruled; for as diamond will only be cut by diamond, so a province of fools, thought he (and he was a wise man), can only be ruled by folly. If a priest wishes to send a message to a fair penitent, it is Gobin that is the confidential messenger thereof. If a maid would send a token to her lover, who but Gobin is its bearer? Ah! I am in demand, gossip! If mischief is on foot, Gobin is in it; prayers or plays, wedding or burying, a brawl or a mass, Gobin hath a hand in all! Gobin is the soul of the province! No Gobin, no government—no weddings, no masses—no sins, no sinners—no brawls, no fights—no mirth, no mourning—no burying, no deaths! Put folly out o' the state, and it would go lunatic. Too much wisdom maketh men mad; 'tis a proper mixture, like the baser metal in coin, that maketh the standard o' human wit. I could carry out the figure to your great profit; but I see no speculation in your eye, as the player hath it. Thou hast more o' this alloy than the true metal in thee. I marvel how I came to beget a friendship for such a winesack. Fill thy glass again; it may sharpen, for it cannot dull thee!"

"Nay, friend Gobin, I verily am in grief for the loss of my horse and my disgrace with my master," answered Boviedo, sorrowfully, and heaving a sigh that, with his words, instantly revived sympathy for his condition in the breast of the fool.

"Cheer up, gossip! I will see that thou have a horse

ere the noon, if it be priest Buffo's padnag," he answered, encouragingly, pouring wine into his cup for him. "I am latterly got in the graces o' a youth who will win me with his sword a score o' steeds in an hour. I have done him service ere now! I took to him because his sister took to me, gossip. Not a maid in all the province hath not smiled on Gobin. This you will learn if you stay in it! I have done many an office for her, and ne'er would take a penny. She always smiled showers o' gold, and that was enough for Gobin. She bade me do her brother all the service I could ever, and I swore it; for she sent comforts and medics to the old mother when she got the rheumatiz."

"Who is this master o' thine? Is that myrtle sprig i' thy cap his badge?"

"It is a gentleman's badge, gossip. There's a secret in it."

"Who dost serve?"

"Nay, dull trumpet-blower, I serve no master! I conjoin with him as a friend—a sworn friend. By the holy marrow! he will give thee a horse an' I say it, if he have to get it from the new governor himself, by pitching him to the ground."

"Give me thy hand, good fool," exclaimed the joyful Boviedo. "Let us give a cup to this brave cavalier, thy friend. What name and calling hath he?"

"Calling!" repeated Gobin, indignantly. "Dost thou believe we provincials to be all craftsmen? We are gentlemen cavaliers till found to be otherwise. Hast thou ne'er heard of my cousin Renault the Quadroon? He hath three hundred brave men at his beck and bid for the freedom o' the state. There will be doings, gossip, there will be doings the morn," he added, looking mysteriously; "let thy master look warily to himself; for in that he hath gotten the city, it argues not that he will hold it. Wait till the morn, man. There will be events! Here's to cousin Renault the Quadroon."

"Being thy cousin, gossip, here is to him," he said, filling and emptying his glass. "Is it he who did the fighting in the square and slew so many?"

"Nay, that was Black Jules, as men call him. A devil-born gentleman, with a cutthroat's breeding. He hath been in rebellion against the province because he could not rule after his father. Save us all, gossip! There would ne'er be found an honest man in his government. He hath great show of virtue, and talks loudly of patriotism. He hath a dark soul, with a bloody hand to serve it. But his hand will scarce wield sword again. It hath ended its mischief, and hath the colour o' red it likes so well. Wouldst behold a wicked man's hand?"

"Hath it more fingers than another man's?" asked Boviedo, with sober inquiry.

"See for thyself," said Gobin, taking from his bosom a human hand cloven at the wrist, and laying it upon the trumpeter's knee. Boviedo looked upon it with a cold shudder of affright, and moved back aghast.

"There was a good blow," he said, after Gobin, at his trembling entreaty, had removed it from his person. "Who dealt it, gossip?"

"My brave *bon cousin* Renault, who hath my blessing for it. Is it not a proper hand—shapely and delicate? It should have been his ears; for rogues' ears fetch a price now. Rascas will have the more work to do."

"It hath a diamond in a green stone upon it," said Boviedo, Gobin's words rousing his cupidity.

"And thus it shall remain as the mark by which all men will know it," he answered, almost with fierceness. "It shall be a sign that Orleans was made free the very hour she was enslaved to Spain, when they do see it nailed up in the broad day," he added, with a spark of that spirit occasionally emitted from his fitful mind, betraying, amid a medley of wit and folly, the existence of generous feelings, that held their empire independent of the obliquity of his mind. His head, but not his heart, was wrong; and when the latter, as it often would, did obtain a momentary ascendancy, there was something in his character that commanded respect while he remained under its brief influence. He

spake, therefore, under the inspirations of his feelings, with a degree of enthusiasm that for the time endowed him with new attributes, and caused the surprised Boviedo to believe for the moment that his character had hitherto been assumed.

"Thou art a valiant fool to be a fool, gossip Gobin!" he said, looking upon him with surprise and doubt.

"Thou wilt soon learn that Gobin's brain is motley like his costume," said the fool, with a sad expression, as if, by some wonderful operation of the mind, he had become for a moment conscious of his inferiority. "Poor Gobin, he hath no wit. Folly is his birthright. Mother tells me I shall die one day, and God will give me my soul back again! Dost know, gossip," he said, with a change-like thought to his former manner, "the devil stole away my wits when I was born, lest Gobin should be wiser than himself!" This was whispered as a fearful secret in the ear of the trumpeter.

"Thou shouldst go to the pope! He'll have it out o' his black clutches for thee, if he have to knock him down with the key o' heaven to get it! Come with me to Rome!" added Boviedo, patronisingly.

"Hast seen this key, gossip?" asked Gobin, with simple curiosity, his ideas flying rapidly from subject to subject, the lightest word acting upon his brain like a revolution upon the phase of a kaleidoscope.

"Marry have I, gossip! It is a league and a half long, and solid gold."

"How big, then, is the pope?" asked the fool, very sensibly.

"Seven leagues," said the unblushing trumpeter, whom Gobin's question rather staggered. But he had the gift of lying, and got over it without stumbling.

"I have heard o' his boots," said Gobin; "I would not like to have the cleaning o' 'em."

"He makes the devil do it for him," answered Boviedo, stoutly.

"And useth his tail for a brush, gossip, doth he not?" asked Gobin, gravely.

"Verily, gossip, thou hast a brain and wisdom in't," said Boviedo, who saw the fool had taken his vein.

"Nay, gossip, it cometh by contagion. I do but catch it from thee! The saints grant I take not thy lying with it, which thou hast come by in the natural way! It is by contagion I grow wiser than wise men I hold discourse with, catching their wisdom while they catch my folly to balance it. Thus do I make wisdom out of folly. Marry, gossip! folly is a rare capital i' the world."

"Thou art scholarly, good fool! Hath thy mother, who snoreth in her bed like an ill-keyed bugle, taught thee what thou knowest?"

"Nay. How got thy trumpet hacked so, gossip?"

"I' the wars."

"Thou hast thyself done it to swear by!"

"Nay, an' it were not done in fair battle, I will eat it."

"Then wilt thou have as much brass in thy belly as in thy face."

"Thou art witty! Come thou to Spain, and I will make thee tutor to the king's son."

"Art thou in favour at court?"

"None higher; the king hath nodded to me."

"I know thou art a courtier, then, by thy lying."

"Tis true," said Boviedo, roundly.

"The lie?" asked Gobin, mischievously.

"That I am a courtier!"

"Then the lie is true."

"Thou hast, methinks, somehow the better o' me, gossip," said Boviedo, after endeavouring to make his dull brain comprehend the subtlety of his speech.

"I will puzzle thy scull anon; dost thou know what is a paradox?"

"Is it a tune?"

"A gamut for thy wit."

"Ne'er heard of it, good fool, as I am a courtier."

"I'll prove thee no courtier by thine own mouth."

"Thou art challenged."

"Are not all courtiers liars? Confess."

"Liars most villanous," answered Boviedo, stoutly.

"But thou sayest thou art a courtier?"

VOL. I.—Q

"Yea! gossip Gobin."

"Therefore what thou sayest is not true, and therefore thou art no courtier."

"By the blessed Saint Jude, thou hast rogue's wit. I am no courtier, as sure as my cup is empty. Here's to thy devil's scholarship, Master Gobin," he said, with an amazingly perplexed air, as he turned over in his mind the classical Gobin's paradox.

"I will prove thee a courtier again by thine own lips."

"Do it, and I will make thee a present of a new jerkin, thine being something worn," said the trumpeter, with animation, fixing his dull eyes upon the playful visage of the jester with mystified wonder.

"Art thou not a liar? Confess."

"Yea, gossip! I confess I have lied in my life twice."

"Twice in a minute!"

"Nay, in an hour."

"Then thou art a courtier; and being a liar if thou sayest thou art a courtier, then thou art not a courtier. So thou art both a courtier and no courtier."

"Thou hast got the better o' me in some sort, friend Gobin," said the trumpeter, staring in his face with inebriate wonder, and looking ludicrously bewildered.

"Save in round lies, I can square with thee over a bottle, gossip. We must finish the jug, then I will put thee to bed; for state matters call me to be abroad. I have great affairs on hand, brother, of which, if thou hadst the tenth to do, thy head would be top-heavy, but not with good wine, as it now is. Didst play on thy bugle before the king?"

"Till he hath fainted with the delight o' it"

"Till thou didst affright him with thy braying discord. If mother weren't asleep, thou shouldst give me a note or two o' thy skill."

"I'll do it, gossip," said Boviedo, briskly; "if she wake not at her own nose, she will scarce hear my bugle."

"Nay, let her sleep; she is a poor creature, and hath not had an idea since she gave birth to me. It took her whole stock to furnish me out, gossip."

"I would thou hadst heard me play before the king, Gobin."

"Verily, brother gossip," said Gobin, with a sage nod, "it is a wisdom that hath kept cousin Don Carlos from turning his crown into a cap and bells if he listened to thee."

"He hath the art o' fooling by begetting, I have been told. He needeth not to go to school to learn folly."

"Let us drink his health, comrade mine," said the trumpeter, stoutly. "He is a brave king, and carrieth a long sword."

"Then be he henceforward dubbed cousin Longsword," said the jester, quickly; "but, if he hath bravely, saints bless us! he should inoculate some of his warriors. I wot of some that have more wind than valour."

"That's a well spoken, and hath a moral to it, gossip Gobin; I'm a coward an' it haven't."

"It hath, and thou art a coward, nuncle Pauncho."

"Nay, sayest thou I am a coward, gossip?"

"By this green-bellied monster, that is thy twin brother, I swear it," answered Gobin, flourishing the globular-shaped jug, and bringing it down again upon the table with an emphasis.

"There lieth wit in that, gossip, an' I could dig it out," said Boviedo, with a tipsy, knowing look. "Wherefore am I twin-brother with that green bottle?"

"Because thou art a wineskin, a liquor puncheon, a leviathan claret-bottle."

"Prove me green! prove me green, gossip!"

"I can prove thee green till thou art blue, from which thou art not far off. Thou art green in wit, and green to lose thy horse, and greener to trust thyself to me, not knowing me to be an honest man."

"Nay, gossip Gobin, thou carriest it in thy visage."

"Then my countenance giveth me the lie in my face. Doth my nose look virtuous, gossip?"

"Yea, as an icicle."

"And thine is a most modest nose ; verily, it blusheth like a pomegranate."

"Nay, gossip Gobin, I will swear a pleasant jest lieth in the kernel of that speech, an' I could come at it."

"Make a hammer of thy head, gossip, and crack it."

"By my valiancy, thou art a humorous fool," said the thick-sculled trumpeter.

"And thou a bragging coward."

"Call me not coward, comrade."

"Thou art an arrant coward, a white-livered coward, a chicken coward ! Dost thou deny ?"

"Nay, I am a coward were I a fighting soldier, an' it like thee, gossip ; yet, being a trumpeter, I am no coward."

"Prove me that, and I will help thee to a steed."

"A soldier, gossip, hath his valour in his arm, his occupation being to lay on blows stoutly."

"Nay, his valour lieth in his soul."

"A soldier, worthy Gobin, hath no soul but the captain's word to go and come ; to do this or to do that. He hath no soul, being one in the ranks. His courage, therefore, like a smith's strength, lieth in his strokes. Now, if he lay them on thick and fast, it is courage."

"Bravo, gossip ; now to thy second part."

"The trumpeter, friend Gobin, not being, as thou knowest, a soldier to deal blows withal, but to blow the trumpet, being, as it were, the smith's man at the bellows, his courage lieth not in his arm, but in his wind ; and the longer his wind, the more courage hath he ; and the larger his abdomen, the greater his wind."

"Who taught thee logic, gossip ?" asked the fool.

"An' logic be a note on the bugle, I got it by induction !"

"Is induction a tune ?"

"I will play it for thee, then thou shalt judge. There is ne'er a tune thou canst name I have not

played before his majesty," he said, loosing his bugle from his belt.

"There be *braggato, braggadocioso, liaralto!* Dost play 'em, gossip?"

"I have them all three at my fingers' ends."

"Thou hast them at thy tongue's end, I will swear, gossip: play me logic."

"I will do it, so thou wilt ne'er come to listen to music again, if thou canst not hear mine."

"To it, to it, gossip; I would have a touch of thy windy valour."

The doughty and half-tipsy trumpeter, whose brain and abdomen were of nearly equal mental calibre, placed his brazen bugle to his lips, and, distending his scarlet cheeks like a pair of bagpipes, wound a low, preparatory note, and then blew a long, clear blast. It was instantly answered from without by the loud, martial neighing of a horse, which caused them both to start from their seats.

"*El diablo*," shouted the astonished Gobin.

"It is a horse!" cried the trumpeter, on whose brain the image of a horse had been painted from the moment of his disgrace, while his wits had been ever busy to divine some means of making himself master of one, although his faith in Gobin's often-promised assistance was firm. In his eagerness to reach the door, he threw over bench and table, while Gobin, with a doubtful look, seized the bottle by the neck, and followed close in his rear.

When he opened the tottering door, they beheld, within a few feet of it, a finely-limbed white horse, standing with his ears erect, his neck arched, and his whole attitude that of a war-charger, who "smelleth the battle afar off, and cries among the trumpets, 'Aha, aha!'"

"It is the horse I promised thee, gossip," cried Gobin, with ready quickness, instantly recognising Renault's steed. "Mount him and ride. Wo! ho! Baptiste."

"I fear me he hath a wicked spirit," said Boviado,

with hesitation, his joy at once subsiding on observing his startled eye and spirited attitude.

"Thou wilt ne'er be restored to thy condition of trumpeter, gossip, if thou falter. See, he knoweth me! Lay thy hand upon his mane."

"But he knoweth not me; I have a misgiving of him."

"If thou do not get on him, thou art an ass. Hast thou not won him by thy valour, as thy master bade thee do, else not come before him?"

"Nay, I have not struck a blow for him," said the fat Boviedo, eying the animal askance.

"Doth not thy valour lie in thy wind, and did not the blast o' the trumpet bring him?"

"Thou shouldst ha' remembered my flesh, gossip, and got me a quiet beast. He hath a devil in him."

"He hath spirit: climb to his back, and spur. When thou hast returned to favour, speak a good word for Gobin to thy master." Boviedo, seeing that the animal remained passive, and permitted the fool to touch his bit, grew confident, and, placing one foot in the stirrup, essayed to mount. At this instant, the cunning and ever-watchful Gobin chanced to see the plume of Renault waving above the ruined wall; and, prompted by the subtlety and mischief inherent in his nature, instantly vanished behind a projection of the ruin, and left his fat companion to the tender mercies of the animal's master. The broad back of the unfortunate trumpeter was turned towards the direction from which Renault was approaching, and he was, moreover, too busily engaged in the achievement of getting into the saddle to give heed to anything but his own footing, the while most tenderly soothing the horse, with many a Spanish diminutive of kindness, to induce him to remain quiet. Suddenly he felt the grasp of a strong hand upon his shoulder, and before his eye gleamed a sharp steel weapon.

"Mercy, in the name of the mother of Heaven!" he cried, taking his foot from the stirrup, and dropping bodily on his knees.

"Who art thou I find in the act of robbing me of my steed?" demanded Renault, with a slight smile, his hostile manner at once changing on seeing the fat, oily body of Boviedo. "Speak, or thou diest! By thy speech thou art a Spaniard, and art taken to thieving early after thy coming!"

"Nay, I am no thief, signor," he said, seeing the change in his manner; "ask Master Gobin, whom I have drunk with; he knoweth me to be an honest man."

"Nay, cousin Renault, he is the greatest rogue in all Spain, and hath been sent to the provinces lest he should corrupt the kingdom with his iniquities and diabolities," cried Gobin, suddenly making his appearance on hearing this appeal. "He hath married seven wives, all living, and hath sinned other ways. See his lusty fat! He hath got drunk on the church's wine, and kissed a holy nun of seventy through the grate; look at his lecherous lips! He hath robbed the king's treasury, and slept in his pew of a Sunday forenoon; hath he not a godless look! He hath killed a monk, trod on a cardinal's great toe, and twice sworn by the queen's beard, which is heresy! Moreover, he hath been a courtier, which were a summing up and a crowning of his enormities!"

"Gobin, did I not give thee a message to bear to Charleval? Wherefore art thou here?" demanded Renault, when Gobin had finished his testimony to the astounded Boviedo's honesty.

"I would ha' done it, but this bale o' swine's flesh tempted me to go iniquitizing with him. Should I tell thee, cousin, what loose questions he put to me respecting certain temptations o' the town, ere we had been acquainted ten minutes, thou would stick him with thy dagger—though, by'r lady! there be laid six inches o' fat to go through ere it draw blood! Out upon him, to get me to vouch for his honesty! Marry! was he not in the very act of stealing thy horse? an' thy dagger be seven inches long, give him one inch o' it aneath his ribs."

"Do it not, good youth; heed him not; he is brainless and thin witted! I am an honest man and true, as I am a Christian."

"He is a pagan, and worshippeth his belly. Stick him, cousin."

"Nay, Gobin, thou art at thy mischief. Thou art a companion of his, and, spite of the character thou hast given him, I will let him go, and shall make thee, he being a Spaniard, surety for his good behaviour. 'Thou hast an errand to do: delay it not!' he added, in a tone of authority. "Spaniard, wert thou stealing my horse?"

"No, signor, as I am a poor devil trumpeter! It were this graceless gentleman fool, who calleth himself cousin to your excellency's worship, bade me mount and ride, I having been discomfited of my own, he averring on the Gospels that he were himself the owner of it."

"Take heed, Gobin, what thou doest! Rise, signor! I think I can divine the cause of your discomfiture. Be patient, and thou mayst get thy steed once more."

"May the blessed saints bless your excellency," said Boviedo, embracing his knees. "If I get not my horse again, I shall break my heart of grief."

"An' thou hadst got on Baptiste, thou wouldst ha' broke thy neck," said Gobin, shaking at the same time his head at him, as if he intended to have his revenge for what the trumpeter had said of him.

"See thou follow me," cried Renault to Gobin, as he mounted his horse. "I have something for thee to do ere the dawn. *Adios, señor!* If thou wouldst mount thyself again, trust not to Gobin's ownership, lest thou escape less easily than thou hast now done!" Thus speaking, he put spurs to his horse, and galloped away in the direction of the barrier he had first approached.

"Thank Heaven, nuncle Pauncho, that thou art standing beside me safely on thy two short legs, instead o' being astride that flying horse's back," said Gobin, in as amicable and confident a way as if he had not defamed his friend.

"He would ha' broke my neck," said Boviedo, instinctively moving his head to see if it worked right on his shoulders, likewise showing in his voice and manner no ill-will towards Gobin for his charitable backing of his character.

"Thy neck will one day be broken, gossip," answered Gobin; "but it will be by hemp, and not by horse. In with thee, cousin Spain, and drink or sleep, as thou wilt; I have matters to keep me abroad; and see thou stir not forth till I come back."

"The bottle is wellnigh emptied, worthy Gobin," insinuated Boviedo, taking the capacious jug from the ground, where the fool had dropped it on seeing Renault, and holding it up between his face and the moon.

"Thou wilt find another aneath the table. In with thee, cousin! If mother wake up, quick clap the bottle to her mouth, and she will be soon off again. *Adios, señor,*" he added, after the manner of the quadroon; "when next thou choosest a friend, see that he hath less brain than thyself, which, by'r lady! thou'rt ne'er like to do till thou find one of thine own or thy father's begetting." Thus speaking, he bounded away like a harlequin.

"Good wine is too precious for an old woman," so liloquized the trumpeter, entering the house; "it shall ne'er be said Boviedo Pauncho e'er poured wine down an old woman's throat. This Gobin hath a rare wit—a rare wit hath he, an' I could get to the top and bottom o' it. Natheless he is rare, and hath wit."

Here, taking a long look after his late companion, who was gliding swiftly along the wall of the street in the direction taken by Renault, he closed the door behind him and disappeared within the ruinous tenement.

CHAPTER XV.

SCENE WITHIN THE BARRIERS.

WHEN Renault left the ill-jointed friends, he rode rapidly back in the direction of the barrier he had left in pursuit of the sorceress.

As he approached the post, the sentry levelled his arquebuss, and challenged him as before. Renault hastily gave the countersign, galloped with unchecked speed across the avenue that connected the barrier with the *Place d'Armes*, and entered the dark lane into which he had been about to turn when first challenged from the barrier. The lane was bordered on one side by a few low-roofed, ancient houses, stuccoed with white plaster, having their windows guarded by upright iron bars ; and on the other by a line of that universal shade-tree in the south, the "Pride of India," or "China-tree." They stretched their umbrageous limbs quite across the narrow alley or court, and so shut out the moonlight, that the horseman proceeded on his way almost in total darkness. At length he came to the extremity of the lane, where, stopping up farther passage, stood a vast, gloomy edifice, with a single tower at one angle, in ruins. It was built after the massive models of the age, with a low, elaborate façade, embrasures around the roof, long, narrow, iron-fenced windows, with a projecting balcony to each, and a surface of gray stucco, dingy and crumbling with time. It was in the midst of a grove of majestic sycamores ; and so densely were they planted, it appeared to stand surrounded by a vast forest. The gateway, or *grande porte*, was a low arch, from which the keystone had fallen out, and the bastions of which had partly sunk. One of the massive leaves of its gate hung by a single hinge ; the other was gone, while the long grass grew

rank and thick wherever it could find roothold in the crevices of the broken flagging. It had the appearance of an edifice of a public nature rather than of a private abode; and an unhung bell in the tower, the decayed fragment of a flagstaff rising from the centre, and the royal arms of France carved in stone above the entrance, showed that at a former period this must have been its destination.

As Renault approached the gloomy building, with its dark, iron-guarded windows, through which the moon shone into tenantless apartments, save that the lizard and the owl abode there, he slackened his rein; but, without stopping, his horse trotted through beneath the echoing arch, and issued into an area open to the sky, the four sides of which were bounded by the inner walls of the edifice. All was dark and still around him, and the iron fall of his horse's hoofs reverberated with startling loudness.

In the midst of this court towered a lofty palm-tree, half shielding with its spreading leaves the whole space within. Beside it was a broken fountain, now become a silent and motionless pool, in which the water lay black and dead, while rank verdure grew around it. Here, as elsewhere, the pavement was broken and in ruins. At the opposite side of the court was a lofty door, which, from its height and situation, appeared to lead into an extensive hall beyond. Renault rode across the court to this door, and, without dismounting, took his bugle from his belt, and wound a low, peculiar note upon it. It was immediately replied to by a similar one within, and the quick fall of bars and the clanging of chains were instantly followed by the opening of one of the gates, and the appearance of a young man in the costume of a *courreur du bois*, like that he wore, but less rich in its decorations.

"I am tardy, Jean," said Renault, riding past him into a long, paved passage or corridor. A lamp hung above a door at the far-distant extremity, by the light of which numerous saddled horses were rendered visible, secured by their bridles to the iron bars of a row

of windows, and guarded by two young men in the same costume as the other. "Are all here?"

"All, Signor Captain. Alfrède had feared something had happened to you with these dangerous times."

"I sent Gobin to tell him I should be detained till one; but he chanced to fall in with some gentleman of his own capacity, and forgot my message. Ha! Charleval is impatient!"

While he was speaking, a door beyond the farthest of the troop of horses was flung wide open, and a vast lighted apartment was shown, crowded with men. A handsome young man, dressed precisely like the quadroon, save the addition of a scarlet sash worn across his breast, came forth, and warmly welcomed Renault, who dismounted beside him, giving his horse in charge of one of the young men.

"You are well arrived, Renault," said the youth.

"Gobin should have informed you of the cause of my delay. I met him as I came in from the fortress, and bid him hasten to say I should be detained an hour after midnight."

"There is yet time for action ere the dawn," answered the other, with spirit.

"Patience, Charleval! How is the band?"

"Enthusiasm itself!"

"I will see them."

Renault entered the hall as he spoke, and four hundred swords clashed together in the air to welcome him, but not a voice was heard; it was one martial ringing of steel alone, such as would make a soldier's blood leap. The apartment was lofty and wide, and beneath the white flag of France at one end hung drooping a Spanish flag, its silken folds soiled and torn.

Renault waved his sword in acknowledgment, and then, while every eye was fixed in silent expectation upon the two, walked apart with the young man he had called Charleval to a recess, where stood an elderly soldier leaning upon his sword, beneath whose military hat were visible the noble features of the presi-

dent of the council. He was surrounded by several gentlemen in arms, who a few hours before were presiding in the council-chamber.

"Are we to ride?" asked the president, with interest.

"Osma's night-landing hath defeated our plans utterly," answered Renault, with mortification; "there is no alternative but retreat."

"For this we may thank the Count Jules," replied the president, quickly.

"My brother Jules hath more than this to answer for," answered Renault. "We must to the fortress, and plot now with Ihuahua how to recapture, now that we can no longer save the town."

"One hour earlier," said the other, warmly, "and Orleans would have been lost to Spain for ever!"

A few words will explain the character and object of this midnight assembly, and the ends of its leaders, which were so signally defeated, as it appears, by the sudden step taken by Osma in occupying the city before morning. In the first demand made by Spain three years before for the submission of Orleans, Renault had made himself conspicuous by cutting down the Spanish flag after the Count of Osma had hoisted it upon the flagstaff. This gallant deed operated as an act of oblivion to the memory of his acknowledged Ethiopian blood, and, in the enthusiasm of patriotic feeling, the youth of the province and city passed a resolution to receive him as one of themselves in all relations and circumstances. This at once gave him a high degree of influence, not only among the squadrons, but, being a youth of a military spirit, brave, daring, and patriotic, and gifted with eloquence, he soon gained a moral power over those around him; and in the preparations made for the defence of the city, and maintaining of the allegiance to France, he had conferred upon him the rank of major, and was appointed by the Marquis of Caronde, his father, one of his *aides-de-camp*. Two years having glided away without any interruption from Spain, the diligence of

the citizens abated, their military spirit subsided, and the troops were so far disbanded, that only a nominal guard was kept on duty at the barriers of the city. The marquis, who had so long governed them under France, at length dying a few months before the second appearance of the Condé of Osma, the city became divided into two parties, which had their origin in the bold claim of young Jules Caronde, who, at the head of some forty young men as unprincipled, took possession of the government-house and the insignia of rank, and proclaimed himself governor.

This step was met with indignant surprise by the better portion of the citizens ; but, his gold, which he lavished freely, brought to his party a large accession from that class whose desperate condition any political change might improve ; from men whose patriotism lay no deeper than their interests, and who, flattered by the notice of a noble, attributed to their worth what was due only to their worthlessness, and became willing "paws" to the subtle leader who would make use of them. The citizens got possession of the gates of the armory and of the treasury, while Jules and his insurgents maintained their position in the government-house and Place d'Armes. There they were regularly and closely besieged for twenty days, at the end of which time they were forced to capitulate : the *canaille*, in number three or four hundred men, being permitted to resume their occupations, and retain the freedom of the city as before, while Jules and his party were banished from the capital for the term of a year and a day.

They retired to a small fortress on a lake a league from the town, adjoining one where a horde of the "Ladrones of the Lagoons," ninety in number, had their stronghold, with whom they formed a treaty of amity, and afterward admitted, with subordinate privileges, several of their number to their companionship. These *Ladrones* were composed of outlaws of the province, escaped criminals from Cuba, and others who, by their crimes, had become outcasts from the

civilized world. Their position commanded, by various outlets, both the bay of Mexico and the river, and their pastime (or profession, it may be) was that of piracy. This they carried on by small, sharp-prowed boats of great speed, in which they issued from their inland fastnesses, and suddenly, like a troop of hawk, pounced upon their unsuspecting prey, whether it were the voyager descending the Mississippi with his richly-laden barge, or the lugger freighted with ingots from the mines of Mexico; while the murdering steamer silenced for ever all claimants to the ill-gotten booty. Such were the *allies* of the leader of the insurgent, though Jules and his friends had no share with them in their piracies. Their alliance was based on mutual jealousy and fear rather than on feelings of love or amity; although, if kindred tastes offer any basis for friendship, the two chiefs should have been on terms of the closest brotherhood.

After the expulsion of Jules, which restored the city to its civic propriety, and made a happy and bloodless end of a civil war that threatened to overturn the state, the citizens assembled, and chose for their body six councillors or rulers, who, four months afterward, as has been seen in the person and conduct of their president, showed so much virtue and honest patriotism. Among the warmest movers for, and subsequent supporters of, the electoral government, was the young quadroon Renault, who also was the most direct and formidable opponent of the young Carondek. The hostility of these two young men had originated in parental partiality, and was nourished on the part of the latter by the various mortifications and disappointments of which he had been made the victim. He hated Renault also, naturally enough, because he was his brother, and had Moorish blood in his veins; but he hated him most for his virtue, and the superior rank he held in men's minds. He garnered up vengeance in his soul, and fed upon it; and, knowing Renault's heart his dearest idol, he resolved (not that the lawless passion which the beauty of Azèlie kindled in his thought

was not incentive enough) to couple his vengeance with his lust, and with the same blow gratify the two deepest feelings of his bosom. Renault knew the heart of his brother well, and hated him, as the good man hates sin, with a virtuous and indignant hatred, and free from any mixture of vengeance. He also feared him and watched him !

Lest he should visit upon the city, in alliance with the *Ladrones*, some retributive mischief, the councillors had appointed a municipal guard, consisting of one hundred quadroons under Renault, and one hundred and fifty young creoles under Sieur Charleval, the son of a noble exiled friend of the Marquis of Caronde, and of whom the marquis became guardian on the death of his father. Between himself and Renault there existed a firm friendship, which had been formed on the eventful day Osma had been so disgracefully driven back to his ship. He was the leader of the band of "Seven Brothers," all of whom, save himself, had united themselves now to the cause of Jules, thus eclipsing the bright star of gallantry they had won on that day. About this time a deputation arrived from the Commanche warrior Ihuahua and his son Prince Tlasca, offering to come with a thousand men to aid the defence of Louisiana against Spain, if Count Osma should return. This extraordinary offer was viewed with suspicion, as no motive could be assigned for it ; and answer was returned, that when the province should be in a strait to call in foreign aid, it would avail itself of this prince's courtesy.

Affairs remained in this condition until the day Count Osma again appeared below the town and demanded its submission. On the morning of that day it happened that Jules was in town with eight or ten of his party ; for he himself, with small bands of his adherents, were permitted by the mild councillors, at the earnest solicitation of relatives and friends (all of them being in some way connected with the leading families of the place), to enter the town occasionally, and remain until sunset. It was on this occasion that he conceived the

plan of getting possession of the person of Azèlie, by the diabolical plea of the bondage of her mother. It was the silence of the council that imboldened him, aided by a few of his former adherents among the lower class of citizens, who furnished him and his friends with weapons to attack Renault, unsuspecting of danger, in the public thoroughfare, and subsequently to assail his dwelling, for the purpose of seizing Azèlie and bearing her away to his stronghold. This latter step was only required to rouse the lion in the breast of Renault, and arm him with the deadliest hostility towards the author of it. The startling report of the arrival of the Spaniard had alone preserved the life and honour of his sister. At the news, the mind of Jules, which was ever active to seize upon advantages that would escape less subtle men, was impressed with a scheme to obtain an influence in the city that might ultimately lead to his investiture of the sole authority. He instantly acted upon the impulse; and, hastening from the assault, presented himself before the council, which he knew opposed to the Spanish yoke, and offered his services and those of his adherents for the defence of the city. It was a crisis that admitted of no deliberation; and, hoping the best, the rulers consented to accept the aid he offered, seemingly with much fair patriotism. This step gained, he hastened from the city to the fortress, and returned with the sixty young men composing his band. The magistrates, however, with all the precaution circumstances would admit of being taken, deprived them of their arms when they appeared at the barrier, with the intention of returning them in the council-chamber, when the crisis should arrive for demanding their aid. They, however, had succeeded in obtaining arms of a peculiar invention from a skilful smith, who was a tool of Caronde, and were not long in making use of them for purposes of their own. Their object, whatever it might have been beyond the possession of the keys of the treasury, and, through the defeat of the Spaniards, to inspire confidence in the rabble, was, however, not only unsuc-

cessful, but, as has been seen, attended with the most disastrous consequences to the person of their chief.

This hostile and untimely slaughter in the Place d'Armes, by inducing the captain-general, Osma, to land his troops and take possession of the city by night, also defeated a plan for his disputing his anticipated occupation of the town by daylight, which had been formed by the patriotic Renault and Charleval, with the consent and aid of the president and council. The plan had been conceived by Renault when the council was first called together by the missive of the captain-general; and he secretly sent a messenger, none other than Gobin himself, with a sprig of myrtle to every young man who had composed his former command under the marquis, as well as to those who constituted the municipal guard, and who were denominated *courreurs du bois*, from the resemblance of their costume to that of the Mexican hunters. This silent message was understood by every one who received it, as well as the time and place for the meeting; for, on sudden emergencies, he had before called them together by the same sign. There was no hesitation. Each youth placed the myrtle sprig in his bonnet; and, keeping himself away from the Place d'Armes, notwithstanding the excitement there, when night approached hastened to the well-known rendezvous. Hither Renault himself instantly repaired, after conveying the wounded Don Henrique to his dwelling, and found four hundred of the bravest spirits in the province, with Charleval at their head, ready to receive him. He here detailed to them a plan for defending the town, and explained to them the means by which it could be carried into successful execution.

Concert in action, courageous hearts, and the full determination to cast off the yoke of Spain, were sufficient, he said, to effect anything. "We have twelve pieces of cannon in the Place d'Armes, and ammunition in abundance," he continued. "In twenty minutes we can form a battery that shall blow the Spanish fleet out of the water. If the Spaniards are per-

mitted to land in the morning, the first imprint of their feet upon our sands will be indelible. If they attempt to land, let us dispute their foothold, knee to knee, breast to breast! If we would be free, the blow must be struck this night. Let us march to the Place d'Armes, and save the city. It is a sword in our hands now, or fetters about our necks to-morrow."

"If we are defeated, Renault?" asked Charleval.

"I had laid my plans for success, not defeat," he answered. "If Heaven give us not the best of it, we must return from the town, and form an alliance with Tlasca, and try to regain what we have lost. The fortress of St. John will, till then (if God be not with us to-night!), alone represent the liberties of Louisiana!"

At this moment, the bustling and ever-busy Gobin came running to the hall, and cried that the Spaniards had left their ships in great numbers, and were making a landing.

"The battery, then, is lost to us! Alfrède, ride, I pray thee, and bring back the report. I will marshal the men, and be ready to gallop to the Place d'Armes at a word," cried Renault to Charleval. "Ride fast and free! If the landing is effected, the city is lost, and not a blow struck to save it! It is the night's work of Jules that hath done this for us!" added the indignant quadroon, as he turned to give the stirring orders for his party to mount.

Charleval flew at winged speed towards the spot, swiftly followed by the inquisitive jester on foot, whose restless desire to know what was happening on all sides would not permit him to miss seeing the end of Sieur Charleval's errand, whom, without doubt, he expected to behold attack, sword in hand, the whole Spanish army, and drive them back into the river, which would have been a rare spectacle for Gobin, and an event by no means to be missed.

When Alfrède reached the Place d'Armes, he saw at a glance that all was lost. The *levée* was already bristling with long lines of steel, and waving with plumes, while a squadron of Spanish horse was drawn

up along the shore, ready to ride forward and take possession of the square.

He dismounted, and, leaving his horse loose, glided along within the dark shadow cast by the Cathedral, for the purpose of observing them and ascertaining their numbers, when he saw, waving in the sky above him, the white flag of France. He was more than sixty yards from the foot of the staff, and, forgetful of his steed, immediately, and with but one thought in his mind, ran towards it. Gobin came up at the same instant, and, divining his purpose from the upward direction of his eye, bounded after him across the green.

Charleval already had the cords in his hand, and was endeavouring to lower it, when he discovered that it was entangled near the summit of the pole. Gobin also saw the obstruction, and, without a word, clasped the mast and rapidly ascended it. At this instant they were surprised by the approach of a horseman from the Spanish party, who galloped towards the flag-staff, bearing the standard of Spain. Alfrède at once divined his purpose.

"Haste, Gobin," he cried, "and we may win a pair of them."

The rider came up as he spoke, and Charleval, turning upon him at the moment he himself was discovered by him, seized his horse by the head and struck the rider a blow upon the helmet that made him reel. Boviedo, the horseman being none other than the Andalusian, recovered himself, and instinctively interposed his trumpet between his head and abdomen, and several rapid blows which the *ambuscado* aimed at them. Never trumpet did such service! never brass met steel so stoutly! never trumpeter fought so with trumpet! The clash of steel against brass—the clanging reverberation of the hollow metal—the warlike din! it were no marvel the Count Osma believed his herald engaged in terrific mortal combat! When Charleval beheld the Spaniard riding across the *Plaza* to his rescue, finding his endeavours to hit his antagonist fruitless (such skilful and praise-

worthy use did he make of his trumpet), he suddenly sprang upon him, pitched him outright from his saddle, tore from him the Spanish flag, and, throwing it across the saddle-bow, leaped into his place. Gobin at the same instant having disengaged the cord, lowered the broad standard within reach of his grasp. The next moment, with it wound about his body, he spurred past the surprised Condé at full speed, and regained the rendezvous. On reaching it, he flung himself from his horse, and entered the hall with a triumphant step.

"The Place d'Armes is occupied, and Orleans is now under a Spanish king," he exclaimed; "but her flag has not yet been raised, nor the unstained banner of our own land dishonoured. Behold!"

He displayed, as he spoke, the Spanish banner affixed to his sword, and, waving it above his head, cast it upon the ground, and, in his enthusiasm, trampled it beneath his feet.

"Gaze on your own proud standard!" he cried, waving that of France in the air; "it is sacred to our cause, and be it consecrated the winding-sheet of every brave man who dies for the liberties of his country. *Vive France! Vive Louisienne!*"

Shouts of "*Vive Louisienne, Vive France,*" resounded through the assembly; and, in the enthusiasm of the moment, all forgot that the object of their heart's wish had been defeated.

After Alfrède had related what he had discovered on his arrival in the Place d'Armes, and stated the number of troops to be at least one thousand men, and then, in fewer words, mentioned the part he had acted in getting possession of the two flags, he himself, with the president *Sieur d'Alembert*, *Renault*, and one or two of the subordinate officers, retired apart to consult upon the step to be taken for the expulsion of the Spaniards before they should extend their power from the city over the whole province. It was at length decided, after an hour's deliberation, to withdraw secretly that night in a body from the town, and hoist the pro-

vincial flag beside that of France upon Fort St. John, on the borders of Lake Pontchartrain.

This formidable body then broke up, secretly to re-assemble at the same place at midnight, and there leave behind them that city which they had hoped soon to re-enter as conquerors. Renault passed the intervening hours until twelve o'clock in preparations for the contemplated movement, and then hastened, as has been seen, to see and bid a good-night to Azèlie, in whose charge he had left the wounded youth.

After his departure from home he again sought the rendezvous of the Orleanese patriots, or "*Amis de France*," as they came to be designated, where, after being turned aside by the pursuit of the sorceress, he tardily arrived, finding the brave band already some time assembled.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PASSAGE OF THE BARRIERS.

RENAULT now informed them of Osma's intention and command given (though afterward countermanded) to fire the city. The intelligence was fuel to their patriotic resentments. After a few minutes passed in animated discussion of their present plans and future views, it was decided that the president, with the councillors, and a guard of forty young men, should remain in the city in their homes, to observe and report the progress of events, keeping only so far in concealment as the course of the new governor should render it expedient, disguising their object, and outwardly appearing as quiet citizens who had cheerfully determined to submit to a government they found it in vain longer to resist. This determination being taken as the clock tolled three, the young leaders embraced the

president and his friends, and the order was given to mount.

The vast hall was instantly deserted, and above three hundred young men leaped across the backs of as many saddled steeds in the long corridor ; for then, as now, in Louisiana, every creole was the owner of a favourite riding horse, was an admirable horseman, and was ever in the saddle. The vast, gloomy corridor now presented a stirring and martial scene. The doors opening into the court were swung back, and, with Renault, the president, and Charleval at its head, the spirited cavalcade wound around the fountain, their line moving half in the light and half in the shade cast from the spreading palm-tree.

Beneath the outer arch they halted, and the president and his party of young citizens took leave of the youthful leaders, and, turning aside to the left, rode along a by-street to the hospitable dwelling of the chief councillor, there to remain until day should permit them to go to their several homes undiscovered.

Renault then gave the command to ride forward. At a slow trot the whole troop moved along the shaded lane by which he had come towards the barrier, where he had been challenged. The course they should pursue to get out of the city had been decided on between him and Charleval, provided Gobin, whom he had commanded to meet him, should not make his appearance, which it appeared he was not likely to do. It was their determination, therefore, to ride against the barrier, carry it at the sword's point, and gallop through to the interior ; a course Renault determined upon only as an alternative to one less likely to arouse the city, which, for the sake of those in it, he desired should rest in quiet so long as the Spaniards would suffer its repose. This less violent plan was to send Gobin to amuse the guard, and trust to his cunning and address, when they should ride up, to throw open the gates for them. While he was regretting the necessity of a violent course, that might needlessly alarm the citizens, he saw directly before him Gobin himself,

seated on a stone in the path, grievously bewailing, and perseveringly lifting up his voice louder and louder at every step of their approach towards him. To return a page or two to this personage!

When Gobin came in sight of the barrier, a few moments after parting with the trumpeter, he stopped suddenly, as if he just then remembered that the gates of the town were in possession of the Spaniards.

"Here be the Philistines, and Gobin'll get a baggenet in his ribs," he said, with ludicrous fear.

At the same instant he beheld before him Renault, galloping across the avenue leading from the gate, and heard the quick challenge and reply as he disappeared in the lane.

His reply did not distinctly reach his ear, and he was perplexed to know how he should pass the barrier without bodily danger. "A baggenet was ne'er a bodkin i' the flesh. I ha' been stuck i' the thumb wi' a bodkin, and ne'er minded it," he soliloquized: "but a baggenet and a bullet make a penetration! I would I knew the password! Cousin Renault should ha' lent it me till I get by these enemies. I must needs now trust to my folly, as I ha' done all my life. 'Tis a quality hath stood me in stead, when wit would ha' been hanged. I care not how many wounds they put in my soul, so they harm not my body. I am brave i' the soul, but my flesh hath cowardice in it."

He instantly turned from the street in the direction of the wall, which, by the aid of a bastion, he climbed with activity, and gained the top of a rampart at a spot about one hundred yards from the barrier. He ran, or, rather, skipped swiftly but noiselessly along the summit; and, without being perceived by the steadily-pacing sentry, in a moment stood above him over the arch of the gate. There was a bastion within reach of his foot, and he prepared to descend by it. The sentinel turned at this instant in his walk, and, seeing Gobin's shadow added to the bold outline of the ramparts, stopped short with astonishment, and watched its motions as it appeared gradually to sink into the

shadow of the wall. Just as intelligence seemed to break upon him, his musket was mysteriously lifted from his hands into the air, and he felt himself clasped around the neck by a pair of legs, and his throat grasped by no gentle hand.

"The devil has got me at last!" he hoarsely exclaimed, with horror in his face.

"And he hath caught no saint, brother! The countersign—out with it, or I will choke thee!"

"Orleans and Spain!" answered the soldier, between pain and affright.

"Treachery! treason! Ho, guards, up!" shouted the captain, rushing from the guardhouse on hearing the voices, but stopped with surprise at the singular scene.

"If thou open thy mouth now, villain, I will kill thee!" whispered Gobin in the soldier's ear. "*A bon nocte* to thee, brother Spain. Have I disturbed thy sleep?" he asked, with great address, coolly turning to the officer. "If I have, I meant it not. Cousin Blue-cap and I are having a moonlight gossip o' it. I sit upon his shoulders, I being a-short-legged, and gossip something long in the bones."

"In the fiend's name, tell who thou art?" demanded the captain of the guard, who was now at the head of a score of men, all equally surprised at what they saw. "Gaspar, what means this?"

"Cousin Gaspar hath the lockjaw, brother," answered Gobin. "I leave him to your skill. Give him a glass o' wine; nothing like wine to loosen the jaw-hinges. Take thy arquebuss, Gaspar," he added, placing the weapon in the hand of the soldier, whose fear was rapidly turning to rage, which was not a little increased by the smile that he detected lurking in the face of his captain, who by this time began truly to appreciate the character of Gobin.

"Jump to the ground, and I will give thee a cup o' my best Malmsey, merry Jackanapes," he said to the jester, whose broad visage could not be long in produ-

cing its legitimate effect upon the risible muscles of those who for the first time beheld it.

"Wilt thou treat me fairly, cousin, if I get down?" he asked, warily.

"Down with thee, and may Beelzebub have the roasting of thy carcass!" cried the huge soldier, furiously, vainly endeavouring to shake him off, amid the maddening roars of laughter of his comrades.

The fool gave him a ringing box on the ear; and, leaping to the ground with a loud laugh of mischievous triumph, ran off with the speed of the wind.

"Nay, thy cup of wine, gossip mine," called after him the amused captain of the guard.

"I will give him a barrel of it," fiercely said the soldier Gaspar, levelling and cocking his piece.

"Hold! or I will cut thee down," cried the officer.

"I will fire if I die for it!" he answered, fiercely; and deliberately he pulled the trigger and discharged the piece.

Gobin, who had not got eighty yards from the post, instantly fell with a loud shriek, rolled over on the ground several times, and then, to the surprise of all, jumped up, and fled along the path taken by Renault with renewed speed, while, at the same instant, the soldier received the sword of his enraged officer deep into his shoulder, and sank, with a heavy groan, to the ground.

Gobin, who had fallen between sudden pain and fright, on getting to his feet, ran a few hundred yards farther, when, feeling his hand wet and glutinous, he looked at it with misgiving (for the pain had instantly passed away with the first shock), and to his horror discovered that the joint of his little finger was shot off. He instinctively gave utterance to a loud, terrific yell, and cast himself headlong upon the ground, where for a few minutes he rolled and roared in the most extraordinary manner—now with rage, now with grief, now with pain. At length becoming exhausted, he sat down upon a stone, and began to comfort himself with shreds of philosophy, and see how he could

best turn his wound to his own personal profit and account, not forgetting, meanwhile, to bind it tenderly in his handkerchief. He was at length about to rise up and go towards the old government-house, when he saw the troop approaching, with Renault at their head. He then changed his mind and sat down again; and presently began to give voice to the wailings that reached the sympathizing ear of the quadroom.

"What aileth thee?" asked Renault, feelingly, dismounting from his horse beside him.

"Slain, cousin Renault! Slain! Bullets and baggenets! Gobin ha' got it! I have bled a barrel and a bucket full. I haven't two pints o' pure red blood left!"

"What hath harmed thee, Gobin? I see no wound. If any one hath hurt thee in malice, he shall repent it! Show me thy hurt!"

Here Gobin tenderly raised his left hand, and showed Renault the mutilated member.

"What brute hath done this?" he asked, with indignation.

Gobin informed him in a few pathetic words, and Renault bade him mount behind him and he would avenge him.

"Nay, he ha' got it; I saw him cut down by the captain for it."

"Then rest content, fair cousin," said Renault, with playfulness; "thou wilt ne'er be the worse for the loss of thy finger joint; the story of it will be worth to thee a silver penny each one of the seven times an hour thou wilt tell it, if thou canst find listeners so often. Go back to the gate, and couple with the merry captain thou hast told of, and see if thy blood-letting hath not cleared thy wits, for thou must, by stratagem, open the gates, that myself and troop of brave riders may sally out. Thou knowest, with thy quick perceptions, all I want. Do it fairly, and I will give thee a pension for thy little finger's sake, and no man shall say thou didst not get thy wound fighting side by side with stal-

wart men-at-arms. Bind up thy finger, and forget it till morning. I will then give thee golden salve for it. Go now to the barrier, while we ride slowly forward. Let me hear from thee within a quarter of an hour. All depends on thy address, remember, Gobin !”

“ Wit, cousin, is not perfect wit without folly. Wit is a golden *louis-d’or* in the pocket when a penny is needed, while folly is its small change. As thou and thine are all gold coins, and must needs have some light money to pay thy toll through the barrier, I must e’en give it thee in charity. When thou hearest an ass bray, cousin Renault, know I am among asses, and that the gate is open for thee.”

Thus speaking, Gobin, in whom the prospect of a pension and the consideration his wound would give him, with all his former character returning upon him, limped ludicrously away as if he had lost a toe instead of a finger, and soon disappeared in the direction of the post. He had not been absent above twenty minutes, when Renault, who, with Alfrède and his whole troop, had been impatiently listening, heard the loud braying of an ass just as he had turned himself in his saddle to give the order to dash forward and surprise the post.

“ It is the signal, Charleval ! The fool hath done it : though I must confess, much as I trusted in his peculiar powers and cunning, I had not calculated on success. It may still be doubtful. But let us ride. Fall in two by two, and trot forward in double file and close column !” he cried, spurring on.

The whole line was instantly in rapid motion, and, issuing from the shaded lane into the broad avenue, wheeled round the corner and pressed towards the barrier, which Renault and Alfrède both at the same instant saw was open. “ *Victoire ! brave Gobin !*” they both exclaimed in the one breath.

“ Advance ! at a gallop !” shouted Charleval.

“ Close column, and spur to the rowel !” added Renault.

Sword in hand they came up to the wide opened

barrier, over the top of which Gobin was descried, grinning from ear to ear with mischievous triumph and extravagant delight, capering and shouting as if gone mad with the excitement of the moving spectacle ; while on either side of the gate, paralyzed with sudden fear, stood the astonished Spaniards and their captain.

"Orleans and Spain !" shouted Renault, as he dashed through.

"Orleans and Liberty !" cried Charleval, following him like the wind.

The Spanish captain looked on with fear, as if a troop of spirit-riders were prancing by, while with ringing chains, thundering hoofs, and a loud, rushing noise, the three hundred horsemen passed through the barrier into the open country. In a few minutes afterward they were lost to the eyes of the awe-stricken soldiers in the windings of a forest path, which penetrated deep into the gloomy recesses of the forest.

CHAPTER XVII.

SCENE AT MASS.

THE morning sun shone on a stirring and brilliant scene in the Place d'Armes. Trumpets were sounding ; banners of gold and green were flouting in the sky ; arms flashed like noonday lightning ; horsemen glittering with steel, and gay in plumes and velvet, galloped to and fro across the *Plaza*, and the voices of captains marshalling their men, mingled with the heavy tramp of moving columns, and the thunder of squadrons wheeling into line. The Count of Osma had commanded a *Te Deum* in gratitude for his conquest, and was preparing, with his whole army, to enter the Cathedral, where, obedient to his orders, the priests were already assembled, waiting only for his presence.

In few towns taken by storm has there been known any suspension of daily mass ; and with the occupation of this province and subversion of the former government, the captain-general did not, therefore, desire to proceed so far as the suspension of religious worship on the very day of his triumph ; and, fearing that the daily oblation should cease through his agency, he had yielded to the control of certain superstitious fears rather than to any feelings of religious veneration. With his proclamation for *Te Deum* to be celebrated an hour after sunrise, he issued an invitation, or, rather, mandate, for the citizens to assemble at mass as usual, promising that a space on either side of the crypt should be appropriated to the females, while the porch and places not occupied by the soldiery should be given up to the males : to this invitation he annexed an amnesty for all past offences, on condition of its being generally complied with. Consequently, when, an hour after sunrise, the chimes tolled for mass, the hitherto deserted streets were filled with citizens, the majority of whom were females, on their way to the Place d'Armes. Here the men lingered a while to survey the spectacle, while the women entered the Cathedral, and, with feelings of mingled curiosity, devotion, and expectation, crowded around the altar.

The count had just come forth from his pavilion, and now stood in front of it, surrounded by his principal officers, his hand upon the mane of his warhorse, accompanied by his daughter, the bridle of whose palfrey was held by the Ethiopian eunuch.

The face of the haughty chieftain was pale, and his brow, partly shaded by the sable plumes of his casque, was thoughtful and gloomy. He had evidently passed a sleepless morning since the departure of the enchantress, and remorse was as evidently not unmingled with the motives that led him to proclaim a *Te Deum*. He sought in it also the peace of his own conscience, which, chased by guilty fear, would fain fly to the altar for refuge and protection. The fitful clouds of emotion that now passed across his face betrayed a troubled spirit

rather than a devotional heart ; and his eye roved piercingly over the troops into the crowd beyond, as if in search of some person whom he feared, yet hoped to discover. At length, as if satisfied with his scrutiny, he assumed a more cheerful countenance ; and, turning to his daughter, who, habited, *à l'Amazon*, in a suit of silver cloth scaled like armour, with a green robe fastened across her left shoulder by a single diamond, stood by his side anxiously watching his face, said, with a smile,

"To thy saddle, Lil ! The troops are marshalled, and the mass waits our presence."

"I am most happy, dearest father," she said, pressing his hand and speaking low, "that you have the will to do this holy duty this morning, instead of the fearful deed thou didst contemplate. The glorious sun smiles on thy piety."

"Thou wouldst have made a rare abbess, girl ! Thou art infected with piety, and hast prayers ready at thy tongue's end, like a saintly nun," he said, pleasantly returning her caress.

"Had I not religion, father, I should ne'er have had the courage to follow thee into battle at thy command. It has taken from me all fear of death, and so o'ercome my woman's weakness."

"By the red rood ! thou dost not, in truth, fear death, as I have often witnessed ! but I did lay thy gallant bearing to the blood in thy veins."

"Lay it to my faith and my duty to thee, sir, neither of which shall fail while Heaven gives me life and hope."

"Thou art a good girl, and a brave ! Thy piety hath done thee little harm ; yet I would, for my pride's sake, thou hadst borne thyself in the field as thou hast done alone by the blood that thou hast gotten from thy ancestors. Put thy prayers to account, then, child, this morning, for I know thou lovest thy father, and he hath full need of them !"

He spoke with scornful bitterness the last sentence, and, turning from her, sprang into his saddle. His

example was instantly followed by those about him ; and with his daughter on his left, and beyond her Sulem the Ethiopian, whose gigantic size and ferocious aspect drew all eyes upon him, rode to the front of the line, and gave the command to fall into open column. Having stationed himself, with his staff, before the grand entrance to the Cathedral, the whole body of troops, with slow and solemn martial music, passed in review before him. First came the cuirassiers, shining with poitrel and casque, mounted on gayly-prancing steeds, and moving noisily along with jingling chains and clashing sabres. In their midst, lifted proudly aloft, was borne a crimson standard, on which was inscribed, in letters of gold,

“ESPANIA IN NOVO ORBE VICTRIX.”

Then came the body of lancers, with a cloud of flying pennants fluttering from the upraised lances, and helms streaming with flaming horsehair. Then came, in a long column, the body of men-at-arms, marching in close phalanx to the slow measure of the military music, mingled with which, occasionally, was heard the deep thunder of the organ within the Cathedral. As they approached the entrance, the cuirassiers opened to the right and left, and formed on either side of the door : the lancers did the same ; and the foot, marching down between the lines of cavalry, entered the church. The count then dismounted, which was a signal for the whole troop to leave their saddles ; and, preceded by a Spanish standard, surmounted by a crucifix, borne by the *alfaréz real*, the royal standard-bearer, passed into the church ; the dismounted troopers, marching six abreast in his rear, filed off to the right and left, and filled the entire body of the vast temple ; while the men-at-arms occupied the sides, and the cuirassiers and lancers the centre. Lifting his helmet, which the soldier raises only to his Maker, as he crossed the threshold with Estelle by his side, the count dipped his finger in the font of holy water, and blessed his brow and breast, and was about to pro-

ceed on when his eyes rested on Sulem. They instantly blazed with fierce light, and he cried, with indignant horror,

"Dog of a Mohammedan! would you defile the holy church with your presence? Back with thee beyond the outer portal, and wait my coming!"

The Moor crossed his hands submissively upon his bosom, and retired from the vestibule amid the holy execrations of the soldiers, while with slow and martial tread the Count of Osma moved up the aisle of warriors towards the high altar. Numerous candles, towering like columns of marble, burned around and upon it; and with the dazzling display of gold, and silver, and precious stones on cross and crozier, with the rich dresses of the priests, and all the pomp and circumstance of Roman worship, the whole seemed a blaze of glory.

When the men-at-arms first began to march in, the priest at the foot of the altar commenced chanting "*In nomine patris*;" and, as the knight entered, he ascended it, chanting "*Aufer à nobis*" in a clear, distinct voice that filled the house. The count advanced to the crypt, and, kneeling above it before the altar, seemed for a few seconds to be engaged in inward prayer. He then lifted his head, and, apparently forgetful of all around him, was intent solely on the progress of the mass. The gorgeous apparel of the altar; the imposing manner and costume of the priests; the religious tone of the temple; the clouds of ascending incense; and the sublime anthem of "*Gloria in excelsis*," swelling from the choir and filling all the dome, impressed his mind with holy and reverential awe. His soul was overpowered; his spirit enchanted; and, willingly yielding up his senses to the scene, he deluded himself with the belief that his emotions of pleased awe proceeded from reverential piety. The worship of Estelle, who knelt beside him, was as pure as her own spirit. It originated in the soul, and was far elevated above sense. Her responses were deep and fervent, and her adoration humble and sincere.

After the adoration and oblation of the Host and of the chalice, and when the priest had blessed the incense, the count rose from his knees as if he were wearied with his devotions, or had performed enough of an accustomed duty to make his conscience easy, and began to survey the worshippers about him. His eyes, after glancing with military pride over the serried hosts that kneeled along the vast pavement, rested on a group of female worshippers on the left of the crypt, and became suddenly fixed, as if fascinated. There were many lovely forms clad in flowing veils, and many dark eyes of beauty in that group; but there was one figure—one pair of eyes, that timidly encountered his—that enchained his vision, and the glances of which penetrated his heart. They were of a most piercing black, yet so soft that they seemed to be dissolving in their own fire. They had no sooner met his, being inadvertently directed towards him as he rose from his knees, than they were again turned upon the altar full of adoration, while the lips of the fair owner moved in prayer. He thought she shrunk from his gaze with fear. He observed, too, that her cheek grew pale; that the hand that held the silver-clasped missal trembled; and he was skilled enough in woman's heart to know that, though her lips were praying, and her eyes turned towards the altar with devotion, she was thinking of his fixed look with alarm. He was conscious that she was terrified, and he became more deeply interested in her; for her alarm heightened her rare beauty, and filled him with curiosity to know who she was. Passion at the same instant inflamed his bosom, and he inwardly resolved, if the maiden was to be won, she should become his. That she was a quadroone, the flowing lace veil fastened at the top of the head and descending to the feet, the raven hair, and voluptuous outline of the symmetrical person, sufficiently betrayed. As he gazed, his soul was fired with the guilty desire that had taken possession of it, and the sublime anthem of *Te Deum* swelled unheeded upon his ears, for thenceforward he had neither ears,

nor eyes, nor thought, save for the fair creature who had fascinated his senses.

Beside the maiden he observed that there kneeled a dark and singularly handsome woman, who, from her air and manner, was her mother or her *duenna*; and he saw with pleasure that she had discovered his silent admiration of her *protégée*, and by word and look reproved the timidity with which she shrunk from it. He acknowledged her favouring part in this pantomime by a glance, which she returned with such intelligence that he was at once assured that the chief obstacles to his success were removed. It has been said that the Count of Osma, notwithstanding he was the father of a beautiful girl of sixteen, was still a gay and gallant man; and that, although forty years of age, female beauty had for him the charm and fascination of his youth. Enough, too, has been given of his character to show that, in seeking the indulgence of his wishes, he was likely to be restrained by no very lofty moral sense. It was Azèlie who was the object of his passion; and the proud and gratified look of her mother betrayed that the moment she had hoped for had arrived; that the plan she had conceived for the ambitious advancement of her daughter, and her own revenge upon the gay Marquis Caronde, had opened as she would wish it. From the hour of the Spanish governor's arrival, after being satisfied that she could look no longer towards the outlawed Jules, she had secretly determined, trusting to the surpassing charms of Azèlie, to place her, on the first public occasion, in the view of the captain-general. The proclamation for mass presented to her active mind an opportunity not to be passed by; and, commanding Azèlie to follow her, she entered the Cathedral, and kneeled with her near the spot reserved for the governor. She saw, as she had anticipated, the effect of her beauty upon him, and her triumph was thus far complete.

The mass at length terminated with the brief ceremony of consecrating the standard by sprinkling it with holy water, and the benediction of the priest was pro-

nounced upon the assembly. A thousand voices responded "*Amen*;" a hundred banners waved above a sea of plumes, and the organ sent out its answering thunder, while through clouds of incense gleamed the lances of the retiring columns. The Spanish knight, whose piety had so soon changed to passion, and whose adoration for the image of the Virgin had so readily become transfixed to a living maiden, after vainly endeavouring to encounter once more the timid gazelle eyes of the lovely quadroone, which had produced such an extraordinary effect upon him, left the altar with Estelle, and passed at a hastened step through the line of men-at-arms to the door. They here received their horses from the Ethiopian, and sprung into their saddles. With an impatient eye, the count then watched the lively tread of the men-at-arms as they marched forth to the loud, martial crash of instrumental music, and, as the rear platoon crossed the threshold, he commanded the cavalry to form column and trot forward, and ordered the troops to display their line across the *Place d'Armes* as before. He then remained in his saddle near the door until the female worshippers came forth, when his eye sought among them for the form of Azèlie. At length he discovered her shrinking within the throng from his observation; and, though modestly veiled from head to foot, he could not mistake the air and figure of her who had captivated his senses. Bending in his saddle, he touched the ear of the Moor.

"Sulem, seest thou yonder maiden, veiled, yet vainly striving to conceal the celestial beauty that shines through?" he said, in a low tone, in the listening ear of the ready slave.

He followed the direction of his glance as he spoke, and replied with a look of secret intelligence.

"'Tis enough, Sulem," he answered, approvingly; "I would know who she is, her abode and condition."

"Your slave lives but to obey," replied the Ethiopian.

"Signors!" cried the count, turning from him, and addressing the officers and regidors of the provincial *cabildo*, who were on horseback around him, "we have done our duty to God and the church, now let us do

it to the king and his province! We will presently review the troops, and appoint them quarters, and then take possession of the government-house and offices of state. I would, once for all, this day settle on a firm basis both the municipal and provincial government, and see the *alcalde* and *alguazil mayor*," he continued, bowing to each of these chosen dignitaries, "forthwith assuming the honours and duties of their stations. Before sunset the Spanish laws shall have superseded those of the former superior council, and Spanish officers shall administer them. By the rood, signors, we will have a loyal Spanish city of it ere many hours."

"With the cutting off a few heads," said one of the officers, with a decided tone and manner, that sufficiently showed his willingness to have the recent slaughter of the men-at-arms atoned for by blood.

"We have enough on hand to-day, Don San Juan, to establish ourselves firmly in power; there will be time enough to-morrow to look to these things," said the governor, with a meaning smile of anticipated vengeance; "we must do nothing now to destroy the happy confidence our proclamation of this morning has inspired in the citizens. All in good time. The town's-people must be encouraged to resume their occupations, pursuits, and amusements: by this means we shall at once secure their confidence, and we may then take our vengeance into our own hands. We will imitate the surgeon, who gives a sleeping potion before he proceeds to amputate the limb. The line is formed! Let us ride, signors!"

There was a smile interchanged by the gentlemen present ere they spurred after him, partly at themselves, that they should be mistaken for a moment as to the known character of the count, and be deluded into the belief that he was about to exercise unusual clemency towards the town, with the blood of thirteen of his body-guard not yet drunk up by the earth, and partly at their mutual gratification on the prospect of retribution upon the authors of the massacre.

VOL. I.—T

In less time than the Count of Osma had named, the government was settled, and all its offices filled, from the *alguazil mayor* down to the *guarda mayor* ; and by the middle of the day all the former laws and usages of the province were changed or abolished. The *Cabildo* he established was composed of six perpetual *regidores*, two ordinary *alcaldes*, an attorney-general *syndic*, and a clerk, over which he presided in person ; but it was provided, during his absence, that one of the ordinary *alcaldes* should assume the chair, and immediately on adjournment, that two *regidores* should go to the palace, and report to him what had been done. It held its first session the same afternoon in the council-chamber, and from that time the laws of Spain became the sole guide of this tribunal in their decisions ; but as these, as well as those of the former *régime*, were founded on the Justinian Code, the transition did not become apparent to the citizens before it became complete. The count, as governor, reserved to himself the exercise of judicial power, both in civil and criminal matters, throughout the province, and was the sole arbiter in the tribunal of the *cabildo*. Thus, in a few hours, Louisiana changed laws and masters. The citizens, judging it useless to repine at what could no longer be avoided, at once threw off their hostile character, and received the Spaniards with, if not real, at least outward cordiality. Before night things resumed their wonted course, and the hum of business and the laugh of pleasure were again heard from the bench of the craftsman and the *boudoirs* of beauty ; and, save a body-guard retained at the gate, no troops remained in the Place d'Armes, and nothing was suffered to remain to offend the townsmen's eyes.

The sumptuous chambers of the governor's palace were at noon thrown open to the possession of the new ruler, and its corridors echoed to the step of a Spanish master. Here Estelle found a suite of rooms that seemed to have been expressly prepared for her, and met with a luxury and elegance that compensated her for the gorgeous apartments of the Spanish man.

sions she had left behind. To confirm the universal confidence, and to give the citizens an opportunity of paying their court to him, he being now in full possession of the governor's house, the count issued a proclamation from his private cabinet for a *levée* to be held in the hall of his palace in the evening, to which he invited all citizens friendly to his government, while to the former councillors he sent a courteous command requiring their attendance. Thus, in one short day with consummate address and wisdom, and with a fair countenance of peace, did the wily and politic governor lay the foundation of his power, which shortly he was to exercise in a deed of barbaric revenge, that has no parallel save in the conduct of an Asiatic despot. In the mean while, during the hours that intervened before the approaching *levée*, he made himself acquainted with the state of parties in the city, and also learned who were the true authors of the attack upon his embassy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SCENE AT THE LEVÉE.

THE eventful day closed amid the roar of artillery from the fleet and the battery, and the hour at length arrived when the new governor was to receive the homage of the townsmen and of the chief men of the province. The moon had just risen, and shone brightly upon the Place d'Armes, where a military band of music was playing national Spanish airs, surrounded by crowds of spectators of the lower class, gayly dressed in their holiday attire, while around, on casement and balcony, were grouped beautiful women, listening to the martial melody, and gazing with curiosity upon the lively throngs beneath. All was life and

brilliancy. The windows of the palace were illuminated with a thousand lamps, the lights glancing upon the steel and silver of the governor's body-guard, who, in their rich and brilliant costume, were drawn up before the door, increasing the dazzling effect and enchantment of the scene.

The citizens already began to enter and ascend towards the audience-chamber, some advancing with timidity, yet with stronger curiosity, to behold the face of their new ruler, and mingle in the splendid pageant of the evening ; some going from self-interest, some actuated by their love for *spectacle*, some governed by one motive, some by another, but very few influenced by a sincere desire to pay homage to the Spaniard. The hall of audience was an upper room, of large dimensions, opening on one side, by windows descending to the floor, upon the Place d'Armes, and on the opposite side upon a corridor, which ran around a spacious inner court, paved with marble and ornamented by a magnificent fountain, shaded by fruit-bearing lemon and orange trees. From the lower porch or hall of entrance, which extended from the front through to the court, a spacious stone staircase, guarded by an iron balustrade, conducted to the lofty door of the audience-chamber, which, thrown wide open, displayed the greatest magnificence within. The tall, deep windows were draped with curtains of purple and damask silk, falling from gilded spears like trailing banners ; columns were wreathed with vines and flowers ; the standards of France and Spain, intertwined, festooned the arched ceiling, and from a choir at one extremity the softest music floated through the apartment. The floor was already crowded with citizens, above whose heads danced the plumes of many a Spanish officer, mingling amicably in their midst. Near one of the windows that looked upon the *Plaza* stood the Count of Osma, in the splendid uniform of a Spanish general, his breast blazing with diamonds. On his arm leaned Estelle, no longer the youthful Amazon, but robed like the noble maidens of her country. A spencer of sa-

ble velvet fitted her bust and waist, and was secured at the throat by a ruby of great size and rare beauty. From the girdle a light green robe of satin descended to her feet, and, flowing into a train, was looped up on one side just far enough to display an exquisite foot. Her hair was braided and bound above her temples like a coronet, with a wreath of pearls entwined in it ; and a single star of rubies above her brow. Her manner was all grace and feminine witchery. How gloriously beautiful she appeared ! How many charms had been disguised by her Amazonian costume ! Hadst thou vanity, Estelle, and didst know the power of thy sex's attire, thou wouldst scarce don helmet or corslet more !

With embarrassed eyes and heightened cheek, yet with the grace and dignity of a Juno, she stood beside her stately sire and received the homage of the citizens ; for his wily wisdom led him to embrace this occasion of presenting to them a daughter in whom he took such pride and loved so tenderly ; a sort of love and pride that made him, rather than be separated from its object, give a soldier's education to a maiden whom Nature had endowed with every feminine grace ; that led him to convert the lute into a lance, and seek to make a warrior of a woman. Yet, save a certain degree of decision, and a *brusque* air of independence, that came as much from her father, perhaps, as from the camp, she was still gentle, delicate, and feminine—a woman to love and to be loved with all a man's heart.

By the side of the count stood the *alguazil mayor*, who, first demanding the names of all who came forward, presented them in turn to him. Nearly all the chief citizens had paid homage to the Spanish ruler, and, after having delivered and answered one or two phrases of courtesy, had retired up the hall to converse with one another upon the events of the day, to listen to the music from the orchestra, or curiously watch the progress of presentation. Osma had hitherto worn a placid brow and a smiling lip ; but as the evening advanced without the appearance of the coun-

cillors, he became impatient; and by the knitting of his brow, and his inquiring glance directed towards the door, showed that a storm was brewing that would soon burst upon the heads of the objects of his displeasure.

"What mean your laggard councillors, sirs?" he asked of several of the citizens who were near him ominously watching their indications of angry disappointment. "Why loiter they in their duty? Do they hesitate to acknowledge, or dare to withhold their allegiance? By the red cross of Calatrava! if they be not here presently, their heads shall roll upon the scaffold!"

"Nay, father, bear them with patience!" said Estelle, gently. "They are perchance old men, and may not have had time to reach the hall of audience."

"They shall be dragged hither by their beards if they are not here within a quarter of an hour."

"They will be, sir," she said, earnestly. "Nay, see how thou hast disturbed the confidence and hilarity reigning here but now. Surely, sir, this general homage of the town should gratify thee!"

"Peace, daughter! And you, signors," he cried, turning and sternly addressing those about him, "shall be answerable for their appearance with your lives. Sulem," he added, in a low tone, to the Ethiopian, who stood behind him, "bid Garcilaso hither!"

"Garcilaso lieth wounded to the death," interrupted the Moor.

"Fore God, 'tis truth! and these shall answer it. Bear then this signet to Don Guzman, captain of my body-guard! He will know its import."

The eyes of the slave glistened with sanguinary delight; and, receiving the ring, he was about to leave the hall, when there was heard a sudden movement near the door, and the cry of "The councillors!" rose from a hundred voices.

"Stay, Sulem," commanded the count; and the slave, kneeling, offered him the signet.

"Nay, keep it; we may yet need its aid."

Those about the governor now gave back, and left a space for the approach of a small body of men, at whose head walked the venerable and dignified president of the abolished council.

"Silence, *mayor*! these need no usher," said the count to the officer, who was advancing to meet them to demand their names and rank, as he had done to the others.

As they approached, the count assumed a stern bearing; but when they came nearer, apparently struck with the calm and dignified port of the president, and the firm and manly presence of his companions, he addressed them with less severity than he had determined to do, but still with a displeased tone.

"You are well arrived, signors! We had wellnigh given up the honour of your countenance to our poor *levée*, which had been naught you being absent. You are well come, though, by'r lady! full late; and I am at a loss whether I shall refer your tardiness to contempt of my proclamation and express command, or to the fashion of your province."

"We have no fashion of homage with us towards a conqueror, signor, never before having done homage save to our king and Heaven," answered the president, stopping near the governor, and looking him full in the face.

"Then, by the rood! you would doubtless have us refer it to your contempt of us," he demanded, with angry surprise.

"The Count of Osma may interpret his own words as best suits him," answered the president, with irony.

"Nay, father, speak not!" said Estelle, interposing: "they are here to show you that form of homage you commanded, doubtless that they may obtain for their families and goods the undisturbed security and protection you appended to their obedience. I pray thee receive them with grace!"

"Signors, you see an intercessor for yourselves in my lovely child. For her sake I accept your presence as a sufficient homage and token of your allegiance."

“Nay, signor, our allegiance hath no king but Louis of France,” answered the president, quietly.

“Be it so, Signor President. If thou hadst an army to back thee, thy words were of weight; but, methinks, without such, thy allegiance will little avail France.”

The president smiled meaningly. The count saw the smile, and seemed for a moment to be endeavouring to interpret it; but, being foiled, he appeared to forget it, and said, with the courtesy of a hospitable entertainer, yet with awakened suspicion,

“Now that you are arrived, signors, we will proceed to the banqueting-room, where you will find something for the refreshment of yourselves and fellow-citizens.”

A signal then being given, the doors on the south side of the hall were immediately thrown wide open, and the guests, preceded by the count and his daughter, went into a large and lofty room, where was spread a sumptuous entertainment of wines and fruits. Here the governor pledged his numerous guests, and, by the suavity of his manner and unexpected condescension, worked an extraordinary change in the minds of all present in his favour; while the beauty and grace of his daughter won all hearts.

“Now, Signor President,” he said, with a smile, to the *Sieur d’Alembert* and the other councillors, “we will leave these loyal town’s-people to their repast, and retire to a more orderly entertainment, which I have prepared purposely for yourselves.”

From the peculiar manner of the speaker, the president thought that there was more meant in this invitation than met his ear, and would have declined it; but, seeing no suspicion awakened in the minds of his friends, and trusting for security from treachery to the promise of amnesty and the present company of his lovely daughter, he replied, evasively,

“We thank your excellency! We are plain burghers, and have ever mingled freely with our fellow-townsmen, and are now satisfied to share what thou hast provided for them.”

"Nay, signors," replied the count, "I would do you especial honour; and, besides, knowing how loyally you have held the trust reposed in you, I have hopes that I shall possess eloquence enough to persuade you to transfer this loyalty to Spain."

The councillors knew not whether to construe his words literally or ironically; but they felt sure that they had to do with a crafty man, who, with an outward seeming of friendship, cherished a spirit of hostility against the people he had come to govern. Still, trusting to his knightly word of general pardon to the province, they followed him into a smaller chamber, hung with crimson and gold, lighted with costly girandoles, having a table spread in the midst, dazzling the eyes with gold and silver vessels with which it was laid, and tempting the palate with the rich and rare viands that covered it. There were eight covers, and by each, save that placed at the head, stood a black slave, silent and statue-like.

"You see, signors, I have prepared a private banquet for ourselves; therefore your absence to-night would have been ill-timed. Be seated, and by-and-by, over our wine, we will discourse of those matters of which I just now hinted. I will but see my daughter to her apartment, and be with you."

Thus saying, the count departed by a side-door with Estelle, who secretly gave the president a warning glance as she passed him; and in a few moments he returned, followed by the Moor, ere the surprised councillors could exchange opinions upon this extraordinary courtesy. At the moment the door had closed upon them, the *Sieur d'Alembert*, who could not fail to translate the earnest look of the maiden, also quitted the apartment and returned into the general banquetting-room, where he gave a signal to a young man in the costume of a *courreur du bois*, lounging near, to approach. He whispered a few words in his ear, and the youth instantly left the hall, while he himself quickly returned into the room he had left, just as the count himself re-entered, followed by the Moor.

He had scarcely taken his seat, however, before the massive doors were closed behind him by some invisible agency, convincing him that the supper was meant to be at least as private as it was costly and elegant.

"Now, signors, let us to our banquet," said the count; "our number is small, but the zest of a feast consisteth rather in the spirits around the board than in the number of guests."

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CHAPTER XIX

SCENE IN MASQUERADE.

WHEN the count left Estelle in her chamber to return to the banquet-room, he sternly commanded her not to leave it, nor suffer her slaves to quit it that night. His manner startled her; and a suspicion which entered her mind on beholding the magnificent entertainment, the silent slaves, and the privacy of the room, which had prompted her to seek the eye of the president, became impressed upon her mind, and she believed that her father meditated evil to the councillors.

She vainly strove to banish the thought, but it grew more vivid with the effort. The peculiar look of sinister gratification with which he parted from her; his firm, confident tread as he walked away; the private nature and costly character of the entertainment—which could not have been given solely in honour of men against whom he had, more than once that day, breathed vengeance—with her painful knowledge of his dark character, all led her to the conviction that these men, whose age and dignity of appearance (especially that of the venerable and patriotic president) had interested her, were in danger of death or of foul wrong.

To boldness of spirit in the young is ever united a

generous nature. With the singular education her father had given her, she retained all the tenderness of a virgin that had never roamed beyond bower and *boudoir*. She was proud, noble-hearted, and self-sacrificing. Pure in heart, she knew no evil herself, and wondered at it in others. Loving her father, she was not blind to his errors; and, while hating his crimes, and, like a guardian spirit, working to avert the consequences of his imperative and wicked disposition, she loved himself no less. It was a hard task for her to cherish love and hate towards the same object—to nicely discriminate between the good and evil; to preserve the balance between filial affections and virtuous indignation; to know where to love and where to condemn! She had now a bitter and sore trial of her filial love and sense of moral duty. That her father contemplated evil to his guests, the more she dwelt upon the idea, the more firmly her conviction was settled. Humanity and every benevolent feeling prompted her to save them—from what fate she knew not. Poison, assassination! each pressed upon her mind in turn, making a distinct and terrible picture. But, whatever threatened them, she felt she was called upon to exert herself to prevent crime. How she should proceed, she knew not! Her love for her father pointed out a course, that, while operating for their safety, should protect his honour and shield him (if the act could be averted) from having contemplated it. It was a hard trial between filial love and moral justice.

“What I do must be done now. A moment of delay may be fatal to them, and involve my poor, mistaken father in a crime that men will shudder to name. How shall I proceed? How shall I take the first step? If I enter the banquet-room, my poor arm and voice will avail nothing! Heaven in mercy direct me—aid me to save a beloved father’s honour!” she cried, casting herself on her knees.

For a few moments she remained in deep meditation, and then rose with a countenance full of hope and resolution. Looping her flowing train to her belt, she

cast over her shoulders a military cloak, which completely enveloped her person, and placed low upon her jewelled brow a broad creole's *sombrero*. Then placing a naked sword beneath her arm, she left her chamber, and, entering the long, cloistered gallery that surrounded the court, cautiously moved along in the shadows of the vines that crept luxuriantly over it. Directed by the sounds in the general banquetting-room at its extremity, she approached one of the open windows, through which the cool night-wind was suffered to enter into it, and looked in upon the revellers—for such they had now become. There she lingered a moment, and then, as if her mind was made up, she more carefully arranged the folds of the *roquelaure* about her form, drew the hat deeper over her eyes, and passed through the lofty Venetian casements into the hall. The loud music from the orchestra, the bacchanalian voices of the banqueters, the sound of a thousand moving feet, and the ringing of clashing wine-cups, created a scene of confusion that she paused an instant to contemplate, and to assure herself of her self-possession.

"This is the way my father would enslave the wills of the town's-people, and gain their approval of his contemplated deed. Men feasted and made drunk, as they have been, will be willingly blind to the evil acts of their entertainer. This, then, is the policy that hath assembled this multitude here. Alas! my dear father, flowing seas of wine will not wash out from thy conscience, or Heaven's dread doom-book, one drop of blood!" were the thoughts that passed through her mind. "Now must I seek for one of those youths I have to-day learned were devoted to the party of the councillors. I should know them by a sprig of myrtle worn in their bonnets and worked on their breasts."

Thus soliloquizing, the bold and generous maiden mingled carelessly with the feasters, scarce attracting attention amid the crowd as she slowly passed along, her eye fixed upon every man's bonnet with anxious scrutiny. She moved towards the upper end of the

hall, where the door led into the banquet-room of the councillors, that she might, perchance, learn something there of what was transpiring within before she took her final step. As she approached the upper end of the table, she observed that here the noise and confusion of voices were greatest, and that some one was seated in a chair upon the table, surrounded by a great number of the revellers, who were applauding and encouraging what appeared to be an address to them. At the same instant, she caught sight of a myrtle-sprig in a bonnet twenty feet from her, and was about pressing forward towards it, when she was rudely addressed by a man whom she had rubbed against somewhat quickly.

"Not so fast, signor," he said, speaking thick with wine, "till thou showest thou art better than those thou treadest upon!"

"Nay, good fellow, I meant not to touch thee. Pray let me pass on."

"He hath made apology, Rascas," said one near, who seemed his companion; "let him go."

"Nay, I bethink me he looketh like a traitor," said the other with a hoarse laugh. "Cock thy hat, master, and let us look thee i' the eye."

"Thou wilt see but a youthful one, signor," said Estelle, putting back the flapping brim of her *sombre-ro*, and looking him steadfastly in the face.

The creole surveyed for an instant the fair and boyish countenance presented to his gaze, and then said, roughly,

"Hadst thou a beard, boy, I would have made a quarrel of this matter. But I have none with a strippling like thee. Pledge me and pass on."

"Willingly," said Estelle, receiving the cup he filled and gave to her.

"Name the cup, master," he said, eying her with fixed suspicion.

"Osma," she answered, firmly, lifting the wine-flagon to her lip. Instantly he dashed it from her hand to the ground.

"I would have sworn thou wert one of them. He who pledges the Spaniard with Rascas shall drink his next pledge from a poisoned cup."

"Ha, villain!" she cried, indignantly, "and thou, too, drinking and feasting at his own board! Thou shalt be remembered, sirrah!"

"Lest thou shouldst forget me, take this!" he cried, ferociously, drawing from his breast a stiletto, and striking savagely at her heart.

His arm was arrested ere he could effect his deadly purpose, and the weapon torn from his hand by a stranger, habited precisely like herself, in a *sombrero* drooping over his eyes, and his person wrapped in a dark roquelaure.

"Wouldst thou mingle blood with wine?" he demanded, in a deep, stern tone.

The man, foiled and abashed, turned away with a lowering brow, and mingled with the throng, though Estelle trembled when she saw that his final glance rested upon her with vindictive hate, and she feared he might again cross her path, and defeat her success in the work she had undertaken. But, trusting to the purity of her purpose, she instantly banished this fear, and turned to thank the mysterious individual who had so opportunely interposed to save her life; but he had already retired several paces from her, and the closing throng hid him from her view. She sent after him a grateful thought, and then pursued more guardedly her way to the door of her father's banquet-room.

As she approached it, she saw that the individual upon the table, whose head only she had before seen, was a person of an extraordinary fantastical appearance, with a broad, extravagant visage, uncouth in feature, but glistening with quirks and smiles, while around him she heard roars of laughter, excited by some jest issuing from his cavernous jaws. She thought it was the ugliest and merriest face she had ever beheld; and, notwithstanding the weight of anxiety upon her mind, she could not forbear smiling at the grotesque appearance made by this singularly

strange being. Near him, above the heads of the crowd, towered the myrtle sprig she sought. Pressing forward, she was within a few paces of the wearer, when, as she was urging her way eagerly along, her form caught the eye of this elevated personage, who, with an orange impaled on the point of a knife held in his right hand, and a huge cup of wine elevated in his left, seemed to be the presiding spirit of the revel.

"Ho, cousin Broadbrim; too much haste maketh ill speed," he cried, singling out the hapless Estelle, and directing all eyes towards her.

She stopped confused, and trembled with alarm; but she felt too much was at stake for her to yield to womanly weakness, and that, at every sacrifice, she must now sustain her assumed character.

"Art thou bailiff?" he continued; "there be no rogues here, no escapados from justice! Art thou priest? ne'er penitent wilt thou find till day dawn, and then we shall repent us all that we be too drunk to drink more! Art thou—"

"Nay, your highness," said the disguised maiden, at once taking the humour of the king of the feast, and anxious to escape as soon as possible from observation; "were I bailiff, I should be better bred in my duty than to seek escaped rogues in thy august presence! Were I priest, I should be at my prayers for thy soul's benefit, as in duty bound; or did I seek penitents, it would be at a fast and not at a feast. May your highness live for ever!"

"He has well answered, my subjects and gossips," gleefully cried Gobin, now become a priest of Bacchus. "What shall be done in honour of his rare wit and wisdom? Doth he not deserve to be chosen my prime minister, and to sit at my left hand. If we, both together, rule you not wisely, then there lieth no virtue in good government."

He was answered by a general cry of approval, and one or two of the bacchanals laid hold upon their newly-chosen prime minister to elevate him to the destined honour.

"Thou hast heard our decision, cousin Gray-cloak. Mount! ascend! elevate! Seat thyself at our right hand. We will induct thee into thine office with three pint cups, one poured on thy head, and two down thy gullet. Thanks to cousin Osma, wine is not lacking. Here, cavaliers, let us drink to him!" Cups were filled and lifted in the air, and at cries of

"*Viva Osma! Viva Gobin!*" they were emptied at a draught. Estelle set her cup down untasted, and, in the temporary excitement, sought means to withdraw. But the eyes of Gobin were unusually vigilant.

"Nay, cousin, thou hast too rare a wit to be lost to the state. Come up on the table and be prime minister," he cried, "or give a weighty reason why thou shouldst not," he added, with humour.

"Listen, then, great king of the revels! I am in the court of Cupid, and am hither sent to bid thee and thy court to a feast in the planet Venus on Wednesday se'nnight. I pray thee, therefore, that, having now delivered my message, thou wilt do no injustice to King Cupid by seeking to rob him of his prime minister, and wilt graciously permit me to depart."

"A proper speech, and a conclusive," exclaimed Gobin, whom the humour of the stranger pleased; "thou art at liberty to go after thou hast borne testimony to our regard for thy master, Don Cupid. Fill bumpers, gossips, round! and let us drink to the health of King Cupid, who hath the wisest of prime ministers. May his shadow never be less."

While every cup was upturned on the lips of both Gobin and his courtiers, Estelle adroitly passed behind the revellers, and gained the upper end of the table and the rear of the jester. She was now within a few feet of the door, which she approached in a listening attitude; but the noise in the hall prevented her from hearing anything from within; but her worst fears were confirmed by discovering that a bar was dropped across the door, and that a bolt on the side next to her was shut down into the sill.

"Treachery!" involuntarily fell audibly from her

lips. She fortified herself for the duty she had imposed upon herself by remembering both her father's endangered honour and the imminent peril of the councillors. She now looked anxiously around, and saw standing near her the individual distinguished by the myrtle sprig, whom she had such difficulty in reaching, and whom she had lost sight of during her detention by Gobin, who now once more pursued his orgies, as if of Don Cupid and his prime minister he had never heard.

This person appeared to be observing her with interest, and had evidently approached near the door when he saw her advancing towards it. This did not escape her; and the suspicion that he might be one of her father's instruments passed across her mind, and she feared she might betray herself to an enemy, instead of one who should prove a friend of the victims of his displeasure. Nevertheless, the crisis called for decision, and without hesitation she approached him. There was an expression of honesty and good-nature in his countenance which invited rather than repelled confidence, and, as he seemed to be something under the degree of a gentleman, though young and well-favoured, she felt less embarrassment in addressing him than perhaps she would have done had he been a cavalier of rank.

"Signor, if it please you, step aside with me; I would have a brief word with you," she said, coming near him and speaking in a low tone, then passing him and crossing over to the shadow of a column.

He started with evident surprise, followed her with his glance suspiciously, and then, loosening his sabre in its sheath (for the flapped hat and closely-folded mantle looked treacherous to his eye), walked up to the spot where she stood awaiting him.

"By the myrtle sprig in thy bonnet and on thy breast, thou art one of the *courreurs du bois*!" she said, in the same tone in which she had first spoken to him.

"If thou art a friend of the *courreurs du bois*, thou

wilt give me the sign ; if thou art an enemy, this hall is no place for the show of thy sword-skill," answered the young man, haughtily, and with something like defiance in his tones.

He was turning away, when she said earnestly, reassured by his lofty spirit and bold language, and confident that nothing like murderous guilt or treachery dwelt in his bosom,

"Nay, brave sir, I know no sign of brotherhood save that which binds in one all noble hearts. Art thou a friend of the venerable president of the late provincial council?"

"I love him as a father," answered the youth, fervently ; and the warmth of Estelle's inquiry assured him the speaker was not less a friend to him.

"Then Heaven bless thee, for thou art he I seek."

"Doth danger threaten him?" he demanded, half drawing his sword, and taking a step towards the inner room.

"Hold ! be not rash !" she cried, detaining his arm ; "the president and his council, I fear me, are in great peril !"

"Then are his suspicions true."

"How ! did he suspect ?"

"From the first ; and, returning after he had entered, he sent word by one of our number to our chief, Renault, that peril menaced him."

"My poor father ! Thy honour is already shaded ; yet I will save it and thee, if there is virtue in a child's love !" she said, mentally. "Wherefore art thou here, then ?" she asked.

"To see what passes, and that no one enter but tried men, save across my body. So I promised the good president when he sent my comrade Martin away for Renault !"

"Bless thee, bless thee !" she exclaimed, pressing his arm with sudden earnestness in her thankfulness. "Yet the danger is not from without. Dost thou see the heavy bars and bolts that repel all ingress from this side ?" she added, pointing with her finger towards

the door. "What force will thy captain bring with him?"

"Forty young men, signor, that have but one will, and that one his. He should be here; it is a quarter of an hour since Martin went for him, and he is not wont to be slow when there is a friend to succour or work to do."

"Yonder is a myrtle sprig; but, alas! it is but a single one," cried Estelle, speaking with animation at first as she descried it, and then dropping her voice with disappointment.

"Thou wilt be disappointed, signor, if thou lookest to see them marching like a Spanish phalanx into the palace. Look by yonder column, and thou wilt see a second myrtle sprig; and, wert thou an inch or two taller, thou couldst discern, as I can, two more of our green plumes waving in the entrance. Even the windows opening upon the corridor are means of admitting them into the hall."

Estelle clasped her hands together in silent gratitude, for wherever she turned her eyes appeared a myrtle sprig; and the bonnets to which they were attached were seen moving, one here and one there, in the direction of the spot where she stood, seemingly without design, but all with a certain and steady advance towards the same object. She trembled with mingled joy and apprehension as they came, one by one, towards the column, feeling that the moment had now come when her father was either to be saved from crime and his knightly honour preserved, or to have a hundred witnesses of his consummated guilt.

She turned listeningly towards the inner door, as if she would catch an outcry, and shuddered lest it should be too late. This latter reflection restored her self-possession, and assured her there was no time to lose.

"Yet must no wrong come to *him*. He must be saved if guilty, if I lay down my life for him," said she.

"There is our captain, signor; would you speak with him?" asked the youth.

"Without delay. Is he among these?"

"There," he said, pointing to a tall young man, slowly, and with a careless air, walking up the hall, nodding pleasantly and shaking his head in the negative to those who, as he passed, would have him pledge them in their wine. When he came near Gobin, this personage immediately laid claim to him, and swore on his goblet he should not pass through his vinous dominions without cracking a cup with him.

"I will crack thy crown for thee," he replied, with a good-humoured smile.

"Thou wilt do me a kindness, cousin Renault, an' thou dost; it is over-full with good wine, and I would let out some to make room for more; I have many a round goblet to put aneath my belt the night."

"Thou wilt scarce get that goblet in thy hand aneath it, Gobin; thou wilt have to steal those of less size, an' thou wouldst not have the governor's guard opening thy girdle."

"Out upon thee, gossip! Twit not thy cousin upon his failings! Have not I been i' the wars?" continued the jester, showing his finger bound up. "Because thou didst know I had stolen a silver bodkin or so, shouldst thou blab it? Discretion should ha' kept it secret. It will hurt my credit i' the town. I had looked for better charity at thy hand, cousin. Ah, cousin!" he added, with a sad countenance, "thou hast done me great mischief. Go on—and leave this goblet-stealing rogue with the rogues thou hast found him companying with. Rogues all—arrant rogues all are we!"

The young chief smiled, and, passing on, came into the broad area that intervened between the upper end of the table and the door, near which, in the shadow of one of a row of columns that supported this extremity of the roof of the hall, stood the *courreur du bois* and the disguised Estelle, who by this time had counted above twenty bonnets bearing the myrtle-sprig, within a few paces of the young chief. With his lofty bearing and fine face she had been struck, as her

companion pointed him out to her advancing up the hall ; and while she wondered at his coolness and self-possession with so weighty a matter as she knew to be upon his mind—his deportment defying the keenest scrutiny of a covert purpose—and while she yielded her admiration to the tact with which he escaped from the king of the revels, she felt awakened in her bosom an undefinable interest in him, that made her heart palpitate with emotions hitherto unknown. The deep, manly tones of his voice ; the rich beauty of his smile ; the haughtiness, yet becoming loftiness of his manner, as if speaking forth a noble spirit, deepened the instant impression ; and, without hesitation, she determined to place the fullest confidence in him.

"Yes, I would speak with your captain," she said, earnestly, while the blood that quickly mounted to her cheek and brow at her own ardour, which she could not conceal from herself had a deeper source than the safety of the councillors, would have told one skilled in reading the open heart of a young maiden that in hers already was the germe of what, if not suffered to die, would one day become a flourishing tree. From a careless glance cast by a passing eye often grows the strongest love. Alas ! how many a germe, bursting from a seed thrown by the wayside of the heart, has withered for want of the sower's care, for ever unknown to him ; or has grown up to blossom and then perish in the heart's waste ! If in thy bosom, gentle Estelle, one seed of true love has fallen, may it take deep root, and grow till the sower shall lie down in its shadow, and the golden birds of affection come and lodge in its evergreen branches, "Love, love, love," their undying song !

The young man directly crossed the area, and spoke in a low tone to his captain. Renault glanced in the direction of the column against which Estelle leaned, and then, after a hasty inquiry if any one had passed in or out, and all had remained quiet in the banquet-room, moved across the space towards her. Her heart almost ceased its pulsations ; for the danger

of the councillors, the honour of her father, and the responsibility she had drawn upon herself, all rushed upon her thoughts. What, before seeing the *courreur du bois*, had been only strong suspicion, was now certainty. Danger and death hung over a body of innocent men, and her father's hand was ready to be dyed with the crimson stains of murder. The thought nerved her with resolution; and when Renault, coming up, addressed her in an under but earnest tone, "Monsieur, would you speak with me?" she answered firmly, "The president and his council, banqueting within yonder chamber, are menaced with danger, sir."

"Am I then too late?" he demanded, loosening his bugle from his girdle. "They must be rescued, if I have to contend with the whole Spanish army."

He was about to place the bugle to his lips, which would in an instant have gathered about him the determined band of forty young men, that had fortunately been left in the city that morning with the president, when she caught his arm, and said commandingly,

"Wind not a note, or you will perish with them! If you would save your rulers, follow me forthwith with twelve tried men."

"May I trust you?"

"If I prove false, am I not in your power? Lose not a moment here, but follow me! We have delayed too long!"

"Yonder is not the way to the banquet-room, monsieur," cried Renault, seeing her advance with a quick step towards one of the windows.

"Dost thou not see that this door is barred?" she demanded.

"I do. Treachery most foul! Lead on! It shall be as you desire, for there is an earnestness and sincerity in your tones that are no part of treachery!"

"Send your men upon the corridor singly, and meet me there," she said, crossing the hall, and disappearing through the casement.

Renault immediately walked down through the hall,

speaking a word or two to one here and there, each person addressed at once separating himself from the crowd, and moving towards one of the windows, through which he disappeared. This movement was made with caution and an assumed carelessness in the change of position, without attracting the attention of the banqueters, who, amid the miscellaneous and moving throng, would scarcely note the particular movements of any one individual. Two of the party were Martin, who had been sent away by the president, and the *courreur du bois* who had been left to guard the door of the banquet-room. Renault (who had arrived in town from the lake fortress, whither he had ridden at the head of the chief part of his troop in the early morning, but a few moments before the message from *Sieur d'Alembert* came to him informing him of his suspicions), having seen the men he had chosen leave the hall, followed them shortly afterward himself. Here he found the stranger, to whom he had surrendered his motions, awaiting him at the extremity of the corridor.

"You see, monsieur," he said, addressing him, "that I have obeyed you, and placed in you the most open confidence."

"It shall not prove misplaced, brave signor," answered Estelle, warmly. "I, as well as yourself, have reason to believe danger menaces the liberties, if not the lives, of the venerable body of councillors; and I was seeking in the hall for some of your band (having knowledge of their attachment to the president), to communicate my suspicions and seek their aid, when I fell in with the young man who had constituted himself guard at the door. In a few moments you appeared, as if in answer to my prayers, with a host of strong arms and brave hearts."

"Who art thou, fair youth (for such thy scarcely-seen cheek and voice betray thee to be), who hast taken so deep an interest in the father of our city? Thou art a stranger with us!"

"It matters not, so that I am the friend of those thou lovest. Will you be led by me?"

"I were a base craven were I to refuse thee, generous stranger. For, though I do not see thy features, I see thy heart. Lead on !" he cried, with energy.

Without a word, Estelle walked forward a few steps, and, turning to the left into a dimly-lighted anteroom, crossed it to an opposite door, which was partly open. Renault, with a sign for his men to fall in and move with silence after him, followed close to her, his hand upon his sword, not from fear of treachery on the part of his guide, but with the ready grasp of a man who is prepared to use his weapon in open and hostile encounter with a foe. At this door, which led into the passage that conducted past her own chamber to the private banqueting-room, she paused to listen before proceeding farther. Hearing no sound, she threw it open, and, motioning them to follow, led them into the passage, which was brightly lighted from the lamps shining into it through her own chamber door.

"Now, signora," she said, with a beating heart (for paternal love was struggling with the duty humanity called upon her to perform), "if you will be guided by me and obey my orders, you shall, if not too late, save the lives of many innocent men. But first, on your crossed blades, sacredly swear that the Count of Osma shall not come to harm ! for, if I may not save his honour, I must his life." As she spoke, she drew her own sword from beneath the folds of her cloak, and held it aloft.

"Comrades, let us take the stranger's oath," said Renault, drawing his sword, and crossing that of Estelle.

Twelve more glittering weapons were laid across these, forming a brilliant star of martial crosses, upon which every eye was fixed.

"Swear !" she said, fervently.

"We swear !" repeated Renault.

"We swear !" responded the rest, in one deep and solemn voice.

"It is well," she said, folding the mantle about her ;
"at the extremity of this passage is a private door

leading into the banqueting-room. Follow me silently ; and you, signor, I trust, will do nothing save by my orders."

"Till this event be accomplished, I yield thee obedience, monsieur. Pray lead the way !"

With a quick but noiseless tread, they moved along the narrow hall, and came to a low door covered with green cloth, which, after a moment's listening pause, she softly opened. It led into a dark and spacious closet, the width of the passage, and one that seemed to be the ante-chamber to the banquet-room, the door of which was on the farther side, and was the same through which her father had conducted her to her own apartment.

"A whisper or careless movement may be fatal to both them and us," she said, softly, as she stood on the threshold. "Enter one by one, signors, and station yourselves in the dark sides of this closet, ready to obey me when the time shall come to demand your swords' aid."

"Yes, comrades," said Renault, over whose mind a sudden suspicion of foul play crossed on finding himself and his men led into this dark chamber as if to an ambush ; "yes, my brave comrades, be every man's weapon in his hand, for we know not what nor whom we have to deal with. But, if I have led you to death, I shall die with you."

"Shame on you, signor !" said Estelle, understanding his words ; "look with me through this aperture, and trust a cavalier's honour henceforward."

She placed her hand upon his wrist, and led him to a recess behind the door ; then drawing carefully aside a curtain from a small lattice, that seemed to have been made for the occupant within to communicate with attendants in the little anteroom where they stood, she showed him the interior of the banquet-room, with the Count of Osma seated at the head of the sumptuous table surrounded by the seven councillors.

"Pardon me, signor," he said, pressing Estelle's hand deprecatingly, but instantly withdrawing his grasp,

as if astonished and surprised at the softness of it ; " I will be guided by thee."

" Do so, and thou mayst save them. Let us be thankful to Heaven we are not too late."

" 'Tis a sumptuous feast, and methinks the rulers share it with convivial zest. Our president hath done the Spanish noble wrong," said Renault, looking in upon the gorgeous festive scene with admiration.

" The deepest danger lies deepest hidden !" answered Estelle.

" Poison ! would he poison the cup ?" he exclaimed, with sudden suspicion and alarm ; " then are they dying men as they sit there ! They have already drank to the dregs the poisoned cup. There remains nothing for us but vengeance on the assassin."

" Thine oath !" said Estelle, impressively.

" Nay, it should scarce save him !"

" Then, by the twelve sacred crosses thou hast perjured thyself upon, I will set upon thee an armed band that shall not leave one limb among thee joined to its fellow," said Estelle, whom fear for her father's safety roused. " But enough ! thou hast no fear of poison. Dost thou not behold behind each chair a silent Ethiopian slave ?"

" The attendants whom the courtesy of the Spaniards has given to each guest. I see in it no more."

" Dost thou see each slave has his right hand in his bosom ?"

" And, by Heaven ! there was then, half drawn out by one of them, the shining hilt of a dagger !"

" Thou seest the danger ! Be not too hasty. Dost thou not hear that courteous words fall from my—from the Spanish knight's lips ? The time is not yet come."

" Is this door open, that we may enter to the rescue ?" asked Renault, burning with ardour, his soul filled with horror and indignant surprise at what he saw.

" 'Tis just ajar, and a single effort will fling it wide. Let us be patient, and, with the blessing of Heaven, which has inspired me to this thing, we shall yet save the Spanish noble's honour and the rulers' lives."

"Methinks, fair sir, thou art equally affected towards this wicked knight and the councillors. If thou art a Spaniard, as thy speech and bearing would bespeak thee, verily 'tis wonderful thou art a friend of these rulers; and if thou art of the province, I marvel at thy regard for the new governor."

"He hath virtues with his crimes, signor," said Estelle. "No man is altogether bad—no one so wholly wicked that he hath not some redeeming quality that invites love and confidence. How else is it that the darkest bandit and most ferocious outlaw have ever found woman's affection to entwine itself around their rugged hearts?"

"Truly woman's love is ever a mystery! Methinks it loves most where men hate most," answered Renault, surprised at the ardour of his companion. "It may be that Heaven in mercy hath given her to us for this very end, so that the heart, outcast and desolate, shrinking from the scorn and contempt of men, may not be utterly desolate and lost to humanity."

"Thou sayest, perhaps, truly. Heaven hath never suffered a human mind to live, however lost to the world's charity, without a witness of its benevolence. It would not have any of its creatures live among its fellows without awakening the sympathies that are its birthright. The divine image, however obscured, is never extinguished, and it is given to woman alone to revive it with the torch of affection."

"Your words, signor, are worthy a cavalier, and, heard by a maiden, might win you laurels," said Renault. "Doubtless thou hast been taught this pretty sentiment by some gentler lip than thine own—though, by'r lady! thy lip, what I can see of it, is full gentle for one who carrieth a sword."

"Thou mayst repeat it to the lady of thy love, signor," said Estelle, with a tone that seemed to ask if the youthful chief, in whom she became more and more interested as his ingenuous and generous nature unfolded itself to her, possessed a lady-love.

"Signor! if thou knewest me, thou wouldst scarce-

ly have dared to venture that speech!" said Renault, taking a step backward, and speaking in a gloomy and sad tone of voice.

"Good Signor Captain, pardon me! I meant no offence to thy feelings. But we forget our object here. Listen now to their words! The crisis approaches! Remember thine oath!"

END OF VOL. I.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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